

# A JOURNEY TO THE GARDEN GATE



By  
Ralph M. Townsend



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A JOURNEY TO THE GARDEN GATE













“I SHOULD BE AT THE FRONT GATE BEFORE DARK”  
PRUDENCE ANNE CONTINUED

# A JOURNEY TO THE GARDEN GATE

BY  
RALPH M. TOWNSEND

*With Illustrations by*  
MILO WINTER



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TO  
A. H. T.





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*From Drawings by Milo Winter*





# A JOURNEY TO THE GARDEN GATE

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## CHAPTER I

### HOW IT ALL BEGAN

IT was very lonely in the white house under the elms. It had been like that ever since Mademoiselle had gone away to be married. The new English governess still seemed very strange, and Daddy had never been away for such a long time before. Prudence Anne wished very hard indeed that he might come back soon. She knew he would hurry as much as he could, but three days was a terribly long time, and it gave one a queer feeling, as if things were not solid, to know that you might call all over the house and he would not answer.

Of course you could always go and look at Mam's portrait in the library, but somehow that only made you want Dad the more.

It was hot, too, and Prudence Anne was very tired. It was a fortunate thing that she never cried, because when you cry it's just like rain inside of you and shuts out all the sunlight. So Prudence Anne blinked her eyes and went into the east room and curled up in the big chair in the bow-window, that looked out toward the sea, because that was where Mam used

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to sit when she told fairy stories, and Prudence Anne had discovered she could remember the stories better if she sat in the very same chair.

They were wonderful stories; even Daddy could not tell such splendid ones; and no one in the whole world beside herself knew them or had ever heard them except the telescope that stood on three legs and looked all day at the ocean and never said a word.

It must be dreadfully dull, always looking at the same place, especially if one had to do it all night too. Everybody ought to go to sleep at night. Bed was such a comfortable place, even more comfortable than the big armchair. And nice things happen sooner if you go to sleep until it is the right time for them.

It would n't be a bad idea to go to sleep until Daddy came home. Of course that would not be for a long time yet, not until after dark. And some people might not be able to find you tucked away in the big armchair. But Daddy could. He could always come straight to you wherever you were.

It was nice to have the telescope there too. It was an old friend even if it did have three legs and no arms. You never think much about how many legs and arms people have; that is, people who belong to the family.

It had two eyes too, one that made things look big and one that made them look little. What a lot of difference it must make in the telescope's opinion of you which eye he happened to first catch sight of you with.



Prudence Anne remembered that Daddy had once showed her how to look at him through the small end. It made him seem terribly far off, even when he was right in the same room. He really was terribly far off just now, but she wished she could see him even if he did n't look any bigger than he did through the small end of the telescope.

Perhaps if —

Prudence Anne's fingers slipped from the arm of the chair and her head nodded until her curls lay upon the worn leather like a golden mop.

Then an extraordinary thing happened. The Bluebottle Fly, that had spent all afternoon buzzing against the window-pane, took off his hat and said, quite distinctly, "Why don't you?"

"Why don't I what?" Prudence Anne demanded rather sharply, for she was considerably startled.

"Put the black stool on the wooden chair," responded the Bluebottle Fly cheerfully.

"But why on earth should I?" asked Prudence Anne.

The Bluebottle Fly considered the question carefully.

"There are a number of reasons why you should and why you should not," he replied at length. "Still, it all comes down to the fact that you're not tall enough if you don't."

"Tall enough for what?" asked Prudence Anne.

"Tall enough to look down the telescope."

"How did you know I wanted to look down it?"

"From personal experience," said the Bluebottle Fly, quite earnestly. "I don't know of anything in life that has given me

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as much solid comfort as looking at the world through the small end of the telescope."

"It might scratch the chair," objected Prudence Anne.

The Bluebottle Fly said nothing.

Now you know sometimes, when a thing is suggested to you, the more you think of it the more you feel like doing it. Besides Prudence Anne remembered that Daddy had done more or less the same sort of thing.

Very carefully, so as not to leave marks, Prudence Anne placed the black stool upon the wooden chair and added the large photograph album to make sure that, when she reached the top, she should be high enough.

Then she climbed cautiously to the summit and leaned forward to peer down the telescope. Perhaps she was a little too far away, or perhaps the wooden chair was too slippery to have used. One thing is certain. The photograph album slid treacherously from beneath her feet and she lurched forward and plunged headlong into the yawning mouth of the telescope, which seemed suddenly to have assumed gigantic proportions.

Inside, the telescope was round and slippery and the slope was quite steep, steeper by a good deal than the roof of the barn. Prudence Anne stretched her arms and tried to stop herself, but there was absolutely nothing to catch hold of and she started off downhill at a really alarming rate of speed.

Her efforts to check herself seemed only to make matters worse, so she decided to keep perfectly still. Surely she must get to the other end soon. She had never had any idea the telescope

was so long. So she took a long breath, and then suddenly she shot out into the light and landed quite softly in the middle of a large patch of something blue.

She was not hurt a bit and scrambled to her feet as quickly as possible. On every side of her were beautiful colors, laid out in patterns like a wonderful flower-garden. But there were no flowers. She was standing in a large field of something soft and springy, like turf, except that it was woolly and rather hard to walk on.

"Where on earth am I?" she exclaimed aloud.

"In the middle of the living-room rug," a voice answered close beside her.

Prudence Anne looked up and turned quite pale, she was so frightened. The most alarming creature was walking down the nearest leg of the telescope. It could not possibly be the Bluebottle Fly, who had been buzzing in the window a short time before, and yet it looked like him, only a great many times bigger, quite as big in fact as Prudence Anne herself. But the telescope seemed to have become almost as tall as the Washington Monument.

"Don't be alarmed," said the Bluebottle Fly — for it was he; "I won't hurt you."

"Thanks," murmured Prudence Anne, still shaking a little.

"Although," continued the Bluebottle Fly, a trifle gloomily, "you and your family are responsible for my being an orphan and having lost all my brothers and sisters and twelve uncles and nobody knows how many aunts."



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"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Prudence Anne. "How dreadful! How did it happen?"

"Fly-paper," said the Bluebottle Fly shortly, and polished his third pair of shoes on his second pair of trouser-legs. He seemed to consider the subject closed.

"Could you tell me," Prudence Anne asked presently, in what she tried hard to make her very pleasantest manner, "if it is as far to the hall-door as it looks?"

"It's farther," said the Bluebottle Fly decidedly.

"I don't believe it can be farther than it looks," Prudence Anne objected faintly.

"It is, though," the Bluebottle Fly insisted, not at all as if he was sorry, Prudence Anne thought. "The Measuring Worm told me so yesterday. The gardener brought him in here on some flowers and he had to walk all the way home. He was dreadfully late."

"Does he measure everywhere he goes?" asked Prudence Anne.

"He has to," said the Bluebottle Fly; "that's his job, to know how far every place is from every other place."

"What for?"

"To settle arguments."

"But suppose there aren't any arguments?"

"Then he starts one."

"How stupid," said Prudence Anne.

"Not at all," retorted the Bluebottle Fly; "it's the only reason he is asked to dinner so often."



“FLY-PAPER,” SAID THE BLUEBOTTLE FLY SHORTLY





Prudence Anne sighed. She remembered how she used to love watching Mam get dressed to go out to dinner. Mam was so lovely and so full of fun, every one must miss her dreadfully.

"I suppose it would n't be possible for me to climb up through the telescope again?" she said hesitatingly.

"No, it would not," declared the Bluebottle Fly. "Not without advice," he added, after a moment's thought.

"Who is the best person to go to?"

"The Toad, who lives at the front gate."

"But that is such a dreadfully long way now," objected Prudence Anne, "and I'm horribly tired of being so small."

What the Bluebottle Fly might have suggested no one will ever know, because just then Hilda, the parlor maid, with a dust-cloth about her head and a broom in her hand, appeared in the doorway.

"Heavens!" exclaimed the Bluebottle Fly; "here's that dreadful woman again!" And he flew off rapidly and seated himself on the frame of a picture of Henry the Eighth.

"Hilda!" cried Prudence Anne, with a great feeling of relief at seeing a friend.

But Hilda did not pay the slightest attention to her call. She stood her broom in the corner, and, bending over, seized the edge of the rug in both hands and dragged it out into the hall and through the front door onto the porch.

Prudence Anne was thrown violently on her back by this sudden upheaval, which seemed to her quite as terrifying as the earthquake of the picture in her geography, and did not regain

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her breath until Hilda had reëntered the house and closed the door behind her.

“Well,” she thought, sitting up and feeling herself to make sure no bones were broken, “at any rate, that saved me a long walk. I should not have gotten out here by myself for hours.”

Just then she heard a heavy step on the porch behind her and caught sight of the gardener coming along with two bamboo rods. In an instant she realized that he was going to beat the rug she was sitting on, and in a panic she scrambled to her feet and fled for dear life.

The alarming journey through the hall which Hilda had taken her had fortunately left her quite near the edge of the rug, and by running just as hard as she could she was able to get off of it only a second before the gardener seized upon it and dragged it away. She sank down at the edge of the porch in the shadow of the woodbine to catch her breath and looked out across the front lawn, which reminded her somehow of Brazil, to where, at the farther side, two white gateposts rose almost into the clouds.

It seemed a dreadfully long distance, but, if no one could see her or hear her when she called, something had to be done. Resolutely she rose to her feet.

“I don’t care how far it is,” she said aloud, “I’m going, and if the Toad can’t tell me how to get back through the telescope I’ll wait at the white rosebush where Daddy picks me a flower every night and I know he’ll find me.”

## CHAPTER II

### PRUDENCE ANNE MEETS BLACK ANT AND SPIDER

HAVING made up her mind on this important point Prudence Anne studied the landscape anxiously with a view to laying out some plan for her journey. In the first place, it was necessary to make a start, and this was by no means as simple and easy a thing to do as it sounds, because, right at the very beginning, you had to get down the front steps.

Prudence Anne remembered with astonishment the number of times in her life she had scampered up and down those same steps without a thought of there being anything difficult about the performance. Now they seemed about as impossible to climb down as if each step had been a neat little slice cut out of the Hudson River Palisades.

It was out of the question to jump; the very idea made her feel rather faint. Of course it would be possible to walk all the way around to the back of the house, where the ground rose to the level of the porch, but such a journey would take a dreadfully long time, and then you would have to come all the way back to the bottom of the steps before you could even start for the front gate. There would not be a chance of getting there before Daddy came home so there was not much use in wasting time on that plan.

The only other way of reaching the ground, so far as Prudence Anne could see, was to hit upon some idea for getting



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down the steep, slanting place that ran along at the edge of the steps. It was very slippery-looking and the grade quite frightening when you thought about it. It made Prudence Anne shudder a little to imagine what might happen if you should stumble or lose your balance.

There was a rail at the outside edge, but the intervals between the great posts that supported it were so uncomfortably wide that it did not seem to make matters any easier.

Prudence Anne moved over to the top of the long, smooth surface that stretched down to the gravel path like a gigantic toboggan-slide. Just then she caught sight of an ant in shiny black clothes, which fitted him very tightly, walking uncertainly along the edge of the top step and stopping now and then as though he did not feel altogether certain he was going in the right direction.

"Hello!" called Prudence Anne.

The Black Ant turned and looked at her without replying.

"Have you ever been down this place?" asked Prudence Anne, pointing to the slide, when it seemed reasonably certain he was not going to speak.

The Black Ant nodded.

"Is it hard to do?"

The Black Ant shook his head.

"Do you go very fast?"

Again the Black Ant shook his head.

"What's the matter?" Prudence Anne asked impatiently.

"Can't you speak?"

The Black Ant nodded.

"Well, then, you're very rude," said Prudence Anne: "I'm ashamed of you."

"Ask me something I can't nod or shake my head to," suggested the Black Ant.

"What's your father's name?" demanded Prudence Anne promptly.

"Ant George," said the Black Ant.

"Your father could n't possibly be an aunt," objected Prudence Anne, "and if she was — I mean he was — oh, it's all dreadfully confused — but what I mean is an aunt could n't possibly be called George."

"Ant is a family name," explained the Black Ant. "We always put them first, it's less familiar."

"Oh! I see," exclaimed Prudence Anne. "I did n't quite understand. What's your own name?"

"Ant Bill."

"It's all rather awkward," murmured Prudence Anne.

"Not after you're used to it," the Black Ant declared quite earnestly. "Just try it. Shut your eyes tight and say 'Ant Bill' fifty times and you'll find how much more natural it sounds than the other way around."

Prudence Anne did as he directed, but when she opened her eyes again the Black Ant had vanished and he had never told her anything really about getting down the steep slide.

It was disappointing, but one thing was certain and that was it would not do the slightest good to wait any longer. So, shut-

ting her lips very tightly together, Prudence Anne went to the edge and set her feet carefully, one after the other, on the inclined surface. Then she moved one forward very slowly, without lifting it, and then the other, like a beginner learning to skate.

The paint was rather rough, just at the top, and she got along very well for a while. Of course there was always the uncomfortable feeling that perhaps you could n't get back, even if you wished to do so, and she gave more than one anxious look at the level space already some distance above her.

Then, all of a sudden, without the slightest warning, she came to a slippery place, where the paint was worn smooth, and both feet seemed to run away at once.

By a tremendous effort, she maintained her balance and kept upright, and even felt rather proud for a moment, because she had no parasol, and people in the circus always had a parasol when they did wonderful things on a tight rope.

That feeling did not last long, however, because people in the circus always had a net to land in, and Prudence Anne could not disguise from herself that she was now passing the great posts, that towered up to the rail, at a really terrifying speed. They jumped at you and just missed you as you passed, like telegraph poles when you are in a railway train.

Moreover, the gravel path was nearer now and more clearly to be seen, and, although Prudence Anne distinctly remembered it as smooth and rather soft, it seemed somehow to have become covered with clusters of large, uncomfortable-looking rocks of very considerable size.



Now every one knows that, if you go anywhere really dreadfully fast, you have to slow down before you get there, or else have the proper sort of place to land in, like the people in the circus, or else —

Prudence Anne shut her eyes. She did not wish to think of that last thing.

Perhaps it was because she shut her eyes, perhaps it would have happened anyway, but just at that moment she came to a place where the board, down which she was sliding, was warped a little. Prudence Anne shot off to one side, just as you would if you were coasting and came to a bump. Worse than that, she lost her balance and took several frantic steps sideways in an effort to regain it. By the narrowest possible kind of a wiggle she escaped crashing into one of the tall posts and realized that now there was nothing between her and the edge to save her from tumbling all the way into the flower-garden.

“Oh, dear!” said Prudence Anne to herself, — and there was no doubt that she meant it, — “oh, dear! I am so tired of falling down places. I wish I were at home.”

Which was rather an extraordinary wish, when you come to think of it, because she was on her own front steps.

But, at the very last moment, when she could already see the tops of the heliotrope and pansies far below, she found herself caught up as it were, and held back from destruction by some soft, invisible material, which gave tremendously, but showed no sign of breaking. It was like plunging into a hammock made of silk elastic.

For a minute or so Prudence Anne swung backward and forward with great violence, which was only natural, as she had landed in this strange sort of net at full speed. Gradually, however, the backward and forward motions grew easier and less abrupt, and it was quite pleasant, lying there, swinging to and fro, especially as you did not have to hold on; the material seemed to cling to you.

Presently Prudence Anne turned her head and looked about her. Now that she was not rushing ahead at breakneck speed, and with the light coming from a different angle, she could see things more distinctly and perceived several objects, which, up to the present time, had escaped her notice, amongst others, the net which had saved her from falling over the cliff into the garden.

She examined it carefully, wondering what it could be. It was laid out in a regular pattern like a large piece of lace. The threads that formed it were, for the most part, dull and gray-looking, but here and there, when the sunlight touched them, they glistened like many-colored silk.

Who on earth had put it there, and what on earth was it?

Even while she was asking herself these questions, she realized like a flash what the answer was. For a moment she was quite frightened and struggled hard to get on her feet. It was of no use; she could not move. She was caught in a spider's web.

"Oh, well," thought Prudence Anne, sinking back, a little exhausted with her efforts, "he'll just have to come and let me out, that's all. I wonder where he is."

She could still move her head, so she glanced about her on all sides to see if she could discover the owner of the premises. Presently she succeeded. He was sitting, looking at her, in the farthest corner of the web, under the shadow of the big post.

"Come here immediately," she called, stamping her foot impatiently. Or, rather, she tried to stamp her foot, but found that she could not get loose. She was about to call again, even more peremptorily, when she remembered that she did not know him very well, and besides it is not polite to stamp your foot at any one.

"Please come here and let me out," she said as pleasantly as she could; "I can't move."

This time, the Spider got up and moved slowly toward her. When he came out of the shadow and she could see him more distinctly, she did not like his looks very much. He had a fat body and thin legs and wore a black-and-white suit and a large scarf-pin. Besides that, his face was not only ugly, but had a very disagreeable expression.

"Who are you?" he asked, coming still nearer, and looking at her in a manner which somehow made her feel extremely uncomfortable.

"I am Prudence Anne," replied that young lady, "and I wish to get out."

"What is a prudenceanne?" demanded the Spider. "Is it a Beetle?"

"It is not. It's a little girl."



"Can it sting?"

"It cannot, but it can have Hilda clean your whole web out of here with a broom if you don't let me out of here at once," said Prudence Anne with great dignity.

"They all talk that way at first," observed the Spider; "later on it's different. What did you get in here for if you don't like it?"

"I stumbled," explained Prudence Anne; "and, besides, I did n't see your old web."

"It is n't an old web," declared the Spider. "I just finished it. How dare you call it an old web?"

"I don't care what it is," said Prudence Anne; "I want to get out. Although," she added, being a very truthful little girl, "as a matter of fact, if it had n't been for your web I should have fallen into the garden and might have been hurt quite badly. So I suppose I ought to be thankful it was there."

"I'm thankful," observed the Spider, "and I'm hungry."

"Then hurry up and let me out and you can go and get your luncheon. It's very late for luncheon."

"Exactly what I was thinking," said the Spider, coming a little closer. "You're sure you can't sting?"

"No," declared Prudence Anne; "I can't and I would n't if I could. I hate things that sting."

"So do I," said the Spider; "I quite agree with you, I hope you'll agree with me." And he laughed very loudly, and very foolishly Prudence Anne thought because she could not see anything to laugh about.

"You're sure you are not a Beetle," continued the Spider, stepping off to one side, as though to get a better look at her.

"I've already told you I'm not," said Prudence Anne, "and I should think you could see for yourself. What difference does it make anyway?"

"It makes all the difference in the world," declared the Spider, "because I am on a diet."

Whereupon he took a small book out of his pocket and studied it carefully.

"The doctor says," he observed, without looking up, "Beetles, only three times a week."

"Do you mean," demanded Prudence Anne, getting quite pale, and, to save her life, she could not have kept her voice from shaking, "that if I am not a Beetle you are thinking of eating me?"

"I was," confessed the Spider, "but I am afraid you are a Beetle."

"How can you tell if you don't believe me?" faltered Prudence Anne.

"I shall have to give you an oral examination. All Beetles are very stupid. Now, in the first place, we'll take mathematics. Do your best. Don't answer too quickly. And please don't guess. Are you ready?"

"Yes," assented Prudence Anne faintly.

"Very well, then; now listen carefully, which do you dislike most, addition or subtraction?"

"Addition," replied Prudence Anne promptly.

"Wrong," declared the Spider. "You should have said division."

"But you did n't mention division," protested Prudence Anne.

"You can't expect me to give you the answers," said the Spider. "However, we'll try something else. What color is Madagascar?"

"Pink," ventured Prudence Anne after a pause.

"Too bad, too bad," murmured the Spider. "I'll try one other subject. Give the three least important dates in French history."

"Nobody could do that," declared Prudence Anne.

The Spider seemed very much distressed.

"It's just as I feared," he said; "you're a Beetle without the slightest doubt. I should n't be at all surprised if you were a June Bug. They are the stupidest sort. You would probably have disagreed with me frightfully. It's too bad, too, because I had really taken quite a fancy to you."

"Then you'll let me go?" Prudence Anne asked happily.

The Spider put the small book back in his pocket.

"No," he said slowly; "there might be some mistake and I am dreadfully hungry."

Whereupon he started back toward the place in which he had been sitting when Prudence Anne first caught sight of him.

He had not gone far when a young gentleman, who had the appearance of being very busy and in a great hurry, and was dressed in an unusually striking suit of black-and-yellow stripes,



buttoned in exceedingly tightly at the waist, came bustling along at a tremendous rate and found himself suddenly tangled in the web, just as Prudence Anne had done.

But the newcomer, instead of being at all frightened, became very indignant and shook the web violently, very much as Hilda used to shake the clothes that had been put away in camphor.

The Spider came running back at once and seemed so angry at this behavior that Prudence Anne felt rather anxious for the busy gentleman in black-and-yellow.

However, just at the moment when it seemed that he was about to lay violent hands upon the intruder, the Spider gave a startled exclamation and darted back two or three steps.

He seemed so agitated that Prudence Anne was quite puzzled as to what had alarmed him, until she remembered what he had said about disliking anything that could sting, and then she realized that the busy gentleman in black-and-yellow was a Wasp.

"Here, stop that!" called the Spider, from what even the most nervous person must have felt was a safe distance.

"Let me out!" puffed the Wasp, and went on shaking the web more violently than ever.

"What did you get in for?" demanded the Spider.

"I'll show you when I get out," retorted the Wasp.

"I'm not going to let you out," declared the Spider.

"You won't, if you know what's good for you," panted the Wasp, and made such a determined effort to break the web that

Prudence Anne held on tightly for fear of being thrown into the garden.

And all the time he was shaking the web, the Wasp was saying things he should not have said, just as the ice-man did when he dropped the ice on his toe.

"If he'd only unbutton his coat, he would not get so dreadfully out of breath," thought Prudence Anne. "It's so dreadfully tight it must choke his body."

Perhaps the Spider believed that his unwilling visitor was exhausted by his recent efforts, perhaps he was so much afraid of having his new web torn that he forgot for a moment what he had said to Prudence Anne about stings. What reason he had to change his plans she did not know, but, while the Wasp was resting for a few seconds, with his back turned, the Spider suddenly rushed at him and seized him by the collar.

He was very quick, but the Wasp was equally so. Like a flash he twisted himself about, and, if the Spider had not jumped back just when he did, Prudence Anne felt that he would have been sick in bed for a very long time. As it was, he turned quite pale and scrambled back well out of the way, whereupon the Wasp resumed shaking the web and talking like the ice-man.

"Let me out!" he kept shouting.

"I wish to goodness I could," said the Spider. "I have n't had a peaceful moment since you came."

Now, although he did not seem to be very successful at setting himself at liberty, the Wasp's efforts were not altogether



“WHAT DID YOU GET IN FOR?” DEMANDED THE SPIDER





without result, for presently Prudence Anne felt her foot strike the ground, and, looking down, saw that the web had torn loose just below her and one leg was free.

She turned several times and at last managed to stand up. Once in that position she found it an easy matter to wrench herself entirely away from the web.

She would have liked to stop long enough to see the end of the quarrel, but she felt that she had already lost a good deal of time and still had a dreadfully long way to go. So she slid down the remaining portion of the toboggan-slide, without reaching an alarming rate of speed, and arrived at the bottom comfortably and without any further mishaps.

Without a moment's hesitation, she plunged into the dense forest that lay before her. In the distance she could still hear the Wasp scolding and the Spider complaining.

"Serves him right if his web is torn," she thought: "horrid old thing! To-morrow I'll tell Hilda to sweep him out, anyway."

And then suddenly, with a very queer feeling, like going down too fast in an elevator, she remembered that if she did not get to the front gate and find out how to climb back through the telescope she might never be able to talk to Hilda again.

## CHAPTER III

### THE MEASURING WORM AND MISS LADYBUG

THE forest in which Prudence Anne was now walking was the most extraordinary place she had ever seen. The trees grew closely together and were of ever and ever so many different kinds, some very tall, with straight, slender trunks and nodding tops, and others with broad, fan-shaped branches. There were also quantities of flat, sword-shaped ones, with sharp, rough edges, that you had to be dreadfully careful of, and, every once in a while, a tall one with a flowery top.

Crawling round on one of these last, without any regard to the risks he was taking, for the tree was bending alarmingly beneath his weight, was a stout, jovial-looking gentleman, who reminded Prudence Anne of the Wasp.

"Oh! Mr. Bee!" she called several times, and at last succeeded in attracting his attention.

"Well," he answered, looking down at her, "what do you want?"

"Please tell me what sort of a tree you are on."

"This," said Mr. Bee, taking out a very large pair of gold-rimmed spectacles and staring very hard at her through them, "is a bunch of clover."

"Goodness gracious!" exclaimed Prudence Anne. "Why, then, all these sword-shaped things are nothing but grass, and



that tall one, with the white-and-gold top, is only a daisy. But is n't it really and truly wonderful?"

"Go away," said the Bee; "you're a book-agent."

"I'm not," maintained Prudence Anne indignantly. She did not know exactly what a book-agent was, but she remembered distinctly that Hilda had instructions not to allow one inside the front door.

"You talk like one," insisted Mr. Bee.

"Well, I'm not, just the same."

"It's a lucky thing for you you're not," grumbled Mr. Bee, "because you talk like a poor one." After which he put away his spectacles and flew away.

Prudence Anne looked about her with renewed interest. Even if it was only grass and clover and daisies, and not a great forest of palms and tropical underbrush, it was one of the most wonderful and beautiful places she had ever seen. She remembered Daddy telling a friend of his once that people walked over the most matchless scenery in the world every day of their lives and never noticed it. Well, it was true. Everywhere she looked it was beautiful, every step she took was full of interest, and she wondered over and over again how she could have lived summer after summer so close to such a fascinating wonderland and never explored it before. She was almost glad that she had fallen down the telescope.

Presently a voice behind her disturbed her thought. "Six hundred and eight, six hundred and nine, six hundred and ten," said the voice.

Prudence Anne turned around and saw the Measuring Worm coming toward her. He had on a light-green bath-wrapper, buttoned down to his feet, and a straw hat, and was smoking a yellow gourd pipe.

"Oh! I'm so glad to see you!" exclaimed Prudence Anne.

"Six hundred and eleven," said the Measuring Worm.

"Because you can tell me how far it is to the front gate."

"Six hundred and twelve," continued the Measuring Worm.

"He's worse than a taxi-cab," thought Prudence Anne.

"You know, don't you?" she asked.

"Exactly," said the Measuring Worm.

"Then do tell me."

"I could n't think of such a thing."

"I don't see why not," pleaded Prudence Anne.

"Because then you'd know as much about that particular subject as I do."

"What difference would that make?"

"What difference?" demanded the Measuring Worm, taking his pipe out of his mouth and looking at her in unconcealed astonishment. "Why, supposing we went to the same party — "

He paused.

"Well, supposing we did?" ventured Prudence Anne to encourage him.

"And supposing the subject came up and I was asked and you answered first."

"But I would n't answer if I was not asked," declared Prudence Anne earnestly.

"Six hundred and thirteen," said the Measuring Worm.

"And, anyway," Prudence Anne went on, "I'm not going to the same party."

"Then you're going to the wrong one. You are a stranger here and it is very important that you should meet the right sort of people."

"Whose party are you going to?" asked Prudence Anne.

"I am going to Mrs. Beetle's tea," replied the Measuring Worm with considerable dignity.

"In a green bath-wrapper!" thought Prudence Anne. "Goodness gracious, what queer things people do sometimes!" Aloud she said, "Do you really think I'd better go there too?"

"I most certainly do."

"But I'm not asked."

"Then you're under no obligation to go and it will be all the more complimentary. Mrs. Beetle will be simply delighted."

"If she's going to feel that way about it, I suppose I had better go," decided Prudence Anne thoughtfully. "Though I can't help feeling it's a little unusual."

She was quite unprepared for what followed. First the Measuring Worm drew a little away from her, and then laughed a very disgusted laugh.

"In that case," he said, "I must ask you to consider our acquaintance at an end."

"But why?" asked Prudence Anne, completely at a loss to understand what could possibly have offended him.

"Because you are going to the same party and you told me



you were not and tried to find out my professional secrets in a dishonorable, underhanded way."

Prudence Anne got quite red, up to the very tips of her ears.

"But you advised me to go yourself or I never would have thought of it," she protested.

"Don't make excuses," said the Measuring Worm coldly; "there is too much competition. When you are in the wrong, apologize."

"But I'm not in the wrong!" cried Prudence Anne, stamping her foot angrily; "and I don't believe you know anything about distances at all — you have n't counted for a long time — and I am going to Mrs. Beetle's tea just to tell them what a cheat you are. I don't care how far it is."

"It's four feet, six and five eighths inches," said the Measuring Worm calmly.

Prudence Anne looked at him in amazement. All his ill-temper seemed to have vanished.

"You see," he explained pleasantly, "I have to get up discussions to make people come to me for information, and I was simply experimenting on you to see if I was out of practice."

"You do it extremely well," murmured Prudence Anne, feeling very foolish and uncomfortable.

"A man in my position has to do things well," admitted the Measuring Worm complacently.

At the foot of a tall clump of dandelions, they were joined by a little woman in an old-fashioned bonnet and dotted muslin dress, whom the Measuring Worm introduced as Miss Lady-

bug. He added in a whisper that she wrote for the newspapers. Prudence Anne wondered why he whispered because Miss Ladybug gave her the same information in a decidedly audible tone as soon as he had finished.

"You read the papers, I suppose?" she inquired, with a bright, quick, little glance upward.

Prudence Anne had to confess that she very seldom did with the exception of the funny page on Sunday.

"Dear, dear," sighed Miss Ladybug; "then you never see my articles."

"I'm afraid not," admitted Prudence Anne; "you see, I'm a little young yet. What kind of articles do you write?"

"Charades, canoeing, and cooking receipts. Anything that comes under the letter C."

"Then you are not going to Mrs. Beetle's in a professional capacity," remarked the Measuring Worm.

"Oh, yes," said Miss Ladybug; "that comes under Contemporary History. You are very lucky to be asked," she added, turning again to Prudence Anne.

"I was n't," Prudence Anne answered frankly.

"Six hundred and eighty-nine," murmured the Measuring Worm.

"Everybody, who is anybody, will be there," continued Miss Ladybug.

"Is n't everybody somebody?" asked Prudence Anne.

Miss Ladybug reflected. "I think it would be safer to say that everybody is anybody," she decided at last.

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“Gracious!” thought Prudence Anne; “then who on earth is somebody?”

“Seven hundred and six,” announced the Measuring Worm; “we’re here.”

Prudence Anne looked about her. Mrs. Beetle’s tea-party was being given in a rather bare, earthy spot underneath a rose-bush. There were a great many people present, and every one seemed to be talking at the same time, in addition to which there was a large orchestra playing incessantly as loudly as they could.

They were all dressed in shiny black suits and looked exactly alike, so much so that Prudence Anne could not help laughing.

“Who are the musicians?” she asked.

“The Cricketville Symphony Orchestra,” replied Miss Ladybug stiffly, as if she thought any one should have known that.

“How stupid!” exclaimed Prudence Anne. “I really did n’t need to ask. I listen to them every evening,” she explained hurriedly, for fear of giving the impression that she was hopelessly ignorant.

“Really?” said Miss Ladybug, lifting her eyebrows a trifle.

“Why, yes,” answered Prudence Anne; “they give wonderful concerts. Does n’t everybody go?”

“Not in the evening,” declared Miss Ladybug; “it’s free.”

It was apparently hopeless to try to say the correct thing, and the conversation would probably have ended then and there if the Measuring Worm had not come to the rescue.



"Here is that ridiculous Grasshopper person," he observed suddenly.

Almost before he had finished speaking, a tall gentleman in green with prodigiously long legs made his way through the crowd and passed by them.

"About as gracefully as a Kangaroo might have done," thought Prudence Anne as she watched him nearly upset a waiter who was setting a table made from the cup of an acorn.

"He has n't got very good manners," she said.

"He has n't got anything but a perfectly undeserved reputation," growled the Measuring Worm.

"What for?" asked Prudence Anne.

"He's a professional rival," whispered Miss Ladybug.

"He's no such thing!" declared the Measuring Worm.

"You should n't have listened," exclaimed Miss Ladybug.

"You're jealous. Lots of people go to him and he's very clever."

"He's very inaccurate," insisted the Measuring Worm, "and he has done more to mix up the records of the Department of Distances than any one I know. Now, I will leave it to you," he added, turning to Prudence Anne, — "how tall are you?"

"Five feet, one inch."

"What?" cried the Measuring Worm in astonishment.

"I mean about three quarters of an inch," corrected Prudence Anne hastily.

"Very good. How far can you jump?"

"That depends —" she began.

"Exactly," declared the Measuring Worm triumphantly;

"of course it does, and he pretends that it does n't and tries to give the impression that he is a reliable workman. If I had my way he would have his license taken away from him."

He seemed so annoyed that Prudence Anne reached over and patted him on the arm.

"Please don't quarrel," she said; "it's only wasting your time because no one wants to know how far it is to anywhere."

The Measuring Worm chuckled. "That's very true," he admitted, "and I apologize. It's not often I go so far."

"Come," suggested Miss Ladybug; "let's try to find Mrs. Beetle."

## CHAPTER IV

### MRS. BEETLE'S TEA-PARTY

THEY made their way slowly through the crowd, stopping now and then, while Miss Ladybug pointed out some distinguished person, and finally perceived their hostess, receiving under a dried leaf.

Mrs. Beetle was dressed in black silk, with black jet hair ornaments, and wore a large cameo brooch on the front of her gown. She was nice and round and very jolly-looking, Prudence Anne thought.

"Just say 'How do you do,'" whispered Miss Ladybug, "and don't explain. It won't be the least use to try, because she never pays the slightest attention to what people say."

Before Prudence Anne had time to ask for any further advice, Miss Ladybug seized her by the arm and, taking advantage of a momentary opening in the crowd, led her forward and presented her to her hostess.

"How do you do, my dear," said Mrs. Beetle, beaming; "I am so glad you could come. I should have known you in a minute from your likeness to your father. Quite a remarkable resemblance. I suppose every one speaks of it."

"I am afraid you have made a mistake — " commenced Prudence Anne.

Mrs. Beetle beamed more than ever. "You mean in not going with Mr. Beetle," she interrupted gayly. "Of course I did.



No one loves to travel more than I, but it was all so unexpected; he never said a word to me about it. Absolutely none, my dear. You see he was spending the week-end in the piano and the family moved to Florida without a word of warning. When he came out of the piano he did n't know a soul."

"How ridiculous!" laughed Prudence Anne.

"He always was," assented Mrs. Beetle. "And now, my dear, I must introduce you to some of these people; they are all friends of your father."

"I don't believe —" Prudence Anne commenced; but Mrs. Beetle was too busy beckoning to hear a word, so she stopped. Several of the guests approached presently and joined them.

"I want you to meet the daughter of an old friend of mine," Mrs. Beetle said, patting Prudence Anne affectionately on the shoulder. "My dear, I wish to present Judge Caterpillar, Doctor Mosquito, Captain Dragonfly, the famous aviator, and Mr. Rosebug. Mr. Rosebug is the celebrated poet; we are very proud of him as a member of the family."

"I did n't catch the name," interrupted Mr. Rosebug.

Mrs. Beetle looked anxiously at Prudence Anne.

"Prudence Anne," said that young lady, curtsying.

"I don't think much of that as a name," snapped Mr. Rosebug.

"Rather absurd, eh, what?" commented Captain Dragonfly. "She looks like a bird to me."

"I think perhaps it would be advisable not to let Mrs. Earthworm see her," put in Doctor Mosquito.

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Beetle.

"A robin got part of her husband this morning," said the Doctor in a low voice; "that's the reason she is in half-mourning."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Mrs. Beetle. "My dear, don't you think you could manage to walk on all fours, just while you are here?"

"I could not," declared Prudence Anne firmly; "and I think you are all exceedingly rude."

"I've forgotten her name again," said Mr. Rosebug. "I only remember I did n't like it."

"And I don't like your poetry," exclaimed Prudence Anne, who was getting really dreadfully annoyed.

"That's because you have never read any of it," retorted the author.

"How do you know I have n't?" asked Prudence Anne.

"Because I've got it all here." And he produced a large roll of manuscript from his pocket.

"Oh, do read us 'My Humbug,'" cried Mrs. Beetle, clapping her hands.

The poet, without waiting for further urging, promptly unrolled the manuscript and began:

"Dere 's a great, big moon  
A-hanging up on high,  
And de stars dey all shine bright;  
Dere 's a soft south wind  
A-blowing in de sky,  
And de bull-frog says good-night.

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Humbug, where is you, Humbug?  
Why don't you come and play?  
Dey ain't so many hours  
Before it's break-o'-day.  
Humbug, you stop yoh fooling!  
What am you trying to do?  
Chicken gwine cotch you,  
If Mister Sun  
Gets his big eyes on you."

When he had finished there was quite a little chorus of applause.

"Is n't it really too sweet," murmured Mrs. Beetle, "so old-fashioned and charming?"

"Ripping!" announced Captain Dragonfly; "simply ripping!"

"Very interesting, indeed," added the Doctor; "quite a remarkable study of that sort of thing."

"I was wrong," said Prudence Anne. "It's very nice and I do like it."

"He can do other things besides poetry," put in Mrs. Beetle eagerly, before Mr. Rosebug had had time to acknowledge Prudence Anne's compliment. "He wrote a remarkable book, proving that Butterflies are descended from Caterpillars."

"I did not know there was ever any doubt of that," ventured Prudence Anne a little timidly.

"There was n't, until he wrote his book," announced Mrs. Beetle triumphantly. "That's why it's so remarkable."

The four gentlemen now said good-bye, and went off arm in arm. Prudence Anne was trying to think of some excuse for

getting away herself when Mrs. Beetle whisked her off and presented two gentlemen, who were bent over a card-table, each with a dark lantern.

"Professor Glowworm and Mr. Firefly," she said, adding under her breath; "they play all night usually."

"Won't you take a hand?" asked Mr. Firefly politely.

"We've only got two packs of cards," Professor Glowworm reminded him.

"Then we can both play against her," suggested his friend.

"I'd really rather watch," exclaimed Prudence Anne hurriedly. "I don't know the game."

"Perhaps that would be better," agreed the Professor. "What have you got?" he asked, turning to his companion.

"I've got the King of Clubs," responded Mr. Firefly, producing the card he named.

"So have I," said the Professor, doing likewise. "It's a very close game. What else have you got?"

"I've got the Ace of Diamonds," answered Mr. Firefly, after looking over his hand carefully.

"So have I," declared the Professor. "I don't know when I've seen a closer game."

"Have n't they each got a full pack?" Prudence Anne whispered to Mrs. Beetle.

"Yes, my dear."

"Then how does the game ever end?"

"One of them loses a card after a while," explained Mrs. Beetle. "It's usually the Professor, but he's a wonderful player."



Mrs. Beetle was too good a hostess to spend all her time talking to one guest, and Prudence Anne, who had felt for some minutes that, except for her unwillingness to leave a stranger alone, the good lady would long ago have hustled away to see that everybody else was having a good time, felt really very much relieved to see Miss Ladybug coming toward them.

"I have been writing down a few ideas on Cheese, Chess, and Chintz," she explained as she joined them. "It's to fill in at the bottom of an historical article on Christopher Columbus and Charlotte Corday."

"It must be difficult to have to write always on something commencing with C," observed Prudence Anne.

"It's an almost inexhaustible subject," said Mrs. Beetle. "You see there are all sorts of things like Camphor, Cradles, and Compasses."

"And I have n't even touched yet on Churches, Camels, and Cigars," murmured Miss Ladybug with pardonable pride.

"Or even Candles, Checkers, and Custard," suggested Mrs. Beetle.

"Please, please, don't go on," begged Prudence Anne.

"I could if I wanted to," said Miss Ladybug.

"There is such a thing as overwork," Mrs. Beetle admitted.

Just then Judge Caterpillar came up, eating a piece of rose-leaf, and Mrs. Beetle hurried away to look after the welfare of her other guests.

"A very remarkable woman," remarked Judge Caterpillar, as soon as his mouth was empty.



"I HAVE BEEN WRITING DOWN A FEW IDEAS ON CHEESE, CHESS, AND  
CHINTZ," MISS LADYBUG EXPLAINED



"You mean Mrs. Beetle?" asked Prudence Anne.

"Naturally," replied the Judge; "who else would I mean?"

"I thought you might have been speaking of some one you had just left," she explained.

"But I have n't left anybody," he insisted.

"Goodness!" thought Prudence Anne; "these people are hard to get along with." She looked toward Miss Ladybug for assistance only to find her apparently deep in the labors of authorship.

"Have you known Mrs. Beetle long?" she inquired, turning back to the Judge.

"All my life," replied that distinguished gentleman, pulling his whiskers. "Have you?"

"No, I never saw her until to-day. That is," Prudence Anne added hurriedly, "not to speak to." She had just remembered that she might have passed Mrs. Beetle a dozen times when she was walking up and down the garden-path.

"That's strange," declared the Judge; "she said you were the daughter of an old friend of hers."

"I think she only did that to make me feel at home," explained Prudence Anne. "I'm really a stranger."

"Then she does n't know your father?"

"No."

"It's very upsetting," said the Judge: "she should n't have done it."

"What harm can it do?" asked Prudence Anne a little impatiently.



"All sorts of harm," snapped the Judge. "I have the reputation of being usually well informed, and I've made it almost entirely by disagreeing with Mrs. Beetle. She is always wrong. That's what I like about her; she is so dependable."

"Did she describe my father?" inquired Prudence Anne.

"She did," responded the Judge; "and of course I did not feel the slightest hesitation in saying he was just the opposite. But if she has never seen him she may have been right."

Prudence Anne smiled. "It's too bad," she said soothingly; "but I would n't worry. You were probably right."

"I hope so," he agreed. "It would be a bad thing for the community if I lost confidence in myself."

"Did she say anything in particular about Daddy?"

"She said he was dead."

"Well, he's not," Prudence Anne exclaimed, very much startled.

"Are you sure?"

"Absolutely certain."

"I suppose you know," the Judge grumbled doubtfully; "but she said the gardener stepped on him."

This time Prudence Anne could not keep from laughing out loud. She was wiping the tears from her eyes when Miss Ladybug, having finished her writing, came back and rejoined them.

"What are you two talking about?" she inquired.

"What were we talking about?" asked the Judge, turning to Prudence Anne. It was quite evident he did not wish their conversation repeated.

"I'm not quite sure what we were talking about," she faltered rather lamely.

"That was it," said the Judge; "that and other things."

"Such as?" suggested Miss Ladybug dryly.

"Curiosity," retorted the Judge. "It commences with a C, so I fancy you're quite well informed on the subject."

Miss Ladybug flushed, and Prudence Anne knew, by the way her eyes snapped, that she was about to make a very cross answer when something happened.

There was a slight commotion amongst the people near the entrance and the Spider, his arm in a sling and a bandage about one eye, strode angrily toward them.

"Arrest that person!" he shouted, pointing at Prudence Anne.

"What for?" she asked.

"You know perfectly well," he said.

"I do not!" she insisted.

"Do you deny," he exclaimed, so loudly that everybody could hear him, "that you were one of the pack of ruffians who set upon me and tried to rob me?"

There was an absolute silence. Everybody looked at Prudence Anne. For a moment she felt dazed and did not know what reply to make to such a ridiculous accusation. Then suddenly it flashed upon her that he was trying to make himself the hero of something that had never happened in order to explain the evidence of the punishment he had received from the Wasp.

She was just about to tell them all the true story of what had

really happened when she was struck by the expression on their faces. They believed the Spider, every one of them, and something told her that they would never, never believe her.

What would happen if they did n't? If she could not make them? She would be arrested and locked up and she would not get to the front gate in time to meet Daddy!

She was quite frightened now and stammered when she tried to speak. There was an unfriendly murmur from the crowd and some one shouted, "Get a policeman!"

Prudence Anne looked despairingly about her, and then suddenly a startling interruption occurred. The Grasshopper burst upon the scene, without his hat and with his necktie very much disarranged.

"Run for your lives!" he shouted. "It's coming!"

Instantly there was the greatest confusion. Several of the more active guests started to climb the rosebush. The majority ran in every direction. Miss Ladybug seemed about to faint, but, seeing the Judge, who had turned quite pale, button up his coat and start running, she picked up her skirts and followed him.

Prudence Anne found herself left quite alone in the middle of the frightened crowd.

"What is coming?" she asked a stranger as he dashed by.

He turned a white face toward her. "The Lawn-Mower!" he shouted as he disappeared rapidly behind a bunch of grass.

Prudence Anne felt a great sense of relief. "How absurd!" she thought.

Then suddenly she remembered that Hilda had not heard her when she called. Perhaps the gardener would not. It would not be at all a pleasant experience to have the Lawn-Mower run over one. The wheels were broad and heavy. And those terrible knives —

Without waiting another instant, she started off wildly after the rest, her heart beating so hard she could almost hear it.



## CHAPTER V

### THE FLOOD

IT is very easy to catch fright from other people, just as you catch measles or whooping-cough, and when everybody around you catches it at the same time, any one is apt to do foolish and even dangerous things, just as if they did not have any heads at all.

Prudence Anne suddenly remembered that Daddy had told her, on such occasions, always to wait and think what was the best thing to do and not rush ahead wildly without any plan.

As soon as she remembered, she stopped running and looked about her. She could hear the Lawn-Mower behind her, in the direction of the house, and everybody was hurrying directly away from it, running, jumping, wriggling, and crawling as fast as they could. To follow them would, of course, keep her right in the line the Lawn-Mower was following.

"How foolish!" thought Prudence Anne. "Why don't they go either to one side or the other and get out of the way?" And she turned to the right and soon came upon the Measuring Worm, proceeding very leisurely in the same direction.

"You don't seem in much of a hurry," said Prudence Anne, as she joined him.

"Certainly not," answered the Measuring Worm; "it's only fourteen inches to the gravel path and Lawn-Mowers are not apt to bother one there."

He seemed so calm and undisturbed that Prudence Anne felt rather annoyed with him.

"It was foolish of me not to think of that," she said rather sharply.

"Very," agreed the Measuring Worm.

"It would be more polite if you said it was only natural not to," she declared.

"That is quite possible," he assented.

"Then why don't you do it?"

The Measuring Worm yawned. "What's the answer?" he asked.

"There is n't any answer. It's not a riddle."

"Of course it's not," said the Measuring Worm promptly; "you can't have a riddle without an answer. Everybody knows that."

"Why can't you?" demanded Prudence Anne. "You could have button-hooks without buttons."

"You could," the Measuring Worm admitted, "but there would n't be much money in them."

He seemed tremendously satisfied with this answer, and Prudence Anne, though she tried very hard, could not think of any effective way of contradicting it.

So they walked on in silence and came presently to the edge of the path. Here, there was quite a steep bank to climb down, but, with the assistance of the Measuring Worm, Prudence Anne managed the descent in safety.

Once on the path, the going was easier, although Prudence

Anne could not help a slight feeling of dread that somebody might come along and step on them. She determined very solemnly that, when she regained her right size, she would be very careful not to hurt any of these little people, to whom she had never given a thought in her life before.

"To think of stepping on Mrs. Beetle, ear-rings and all!"

She was so disturbed by the idea that she did not hear Miss Ladybug calling after them to wait for her. The Measuring Worm was not so busy with his thoughts, however, and they halted until Miss Ladybug was able to overtake them.

"Hurry!" she cried as soon as she joined them.

"But you just told us to wait," objected the Measuring Worm rather argumentatively.

"What's the trouble?" asked Prudence Anne.

"The Spider — " panted Miss Ladybug, and paused.

"What about him?" demanded Prudence Anne impatiently.

"He's following us."

"Suppose he is," inquired the Measuring Worm, in a belligerent tone; "what then?"

"He has a Blue Beetle with him."

"Oh," said the Measuring Worm, "that's quite a different matter."

"What's a Blue Beetle?" asked Prudence Anne.

"A policeman," explained Miss Ladybug.

"And a policeman," observed the Measuring Worm, "is nine points of the law."

"Does that mean — " Prudence Anne commenced, but he interrupted her.

"It means you'll be arrested and we'll all be held for trial," he said.

"But I can't wait," Prudence Anne exclaimed, very much alarmed. "I just have to be at the front gate to meet Daddy and it's a dreadfully long way from here. I really have n't a minute to spare. What shall we do?"

"Hurry," suggested the Measuring Worm.

"Exactly what I said in the beginning," murmured Miss Ladybug, in a satisfied tone of voice, and then she gave a sort of squeak and pointed in the direction from which they had just come.

Prudence Anne glanced behind her and saw the Spider, accompanied by a stranger in a shining blue uniform, appear on the bank at the edge of the path.

With frantic haste she turned about and stumbled after the Measuring Worm, Miss Ladybug gasping in the rear.

For some moments Prudence Anne had been conscious of an unusual rushing sound, coming from somewhere in front of them, but she had been too intent on other matters even to wonder what it was. She was therefore completely taken without warning, when the Measuring Worm, who had, quite unnecessarily, it seemed to her, climbed a large boulder, called to her to join them. Impatiently she scrambled up and was about to scold him for delaying at such a critical moment, when he checked her by stretching out his arm and pointing ahead.



Prudence Anne's eyes followed the direction indicated by his finger. Between them and the farther side of the path, where they had hoped to escape the Spider under cover of the sheltering forest, was nothing but water, a deep, dangerous, onrushing current.

"What is it?" she faltered.

"The flood," he answered shortly.

"But I don't remember anything like it. Does it happen often?"

"Very often in dry weather," he responded.

For an instant Prudence Anne was completely puzzled, and then suddenly she realized what had happened. The gardener had turned on the hose.

However, it did n't help matters even if you could explain things that other people did not understand. The Spider was not far behind them and something had to be done promptly.

"Is n't there any way of getting across?" she inquired anxiously.

The Measuring Worm did not even answer; his look was eloquent. Prudence Anne gazed hopelessly about her and seemed about to give up in despair when she gave a start and seized him by the arm.

"I see some one with a boat!" she cried, and, turning, descended the boulder with such speed that she very nearly knocked the little remaining breath out of poor Miss Ladybug.

"Coasting, carelessness, collision," murmured the little lady plaintively.

Prudence Anne did not stop to listen, but hurried on and soon reached the edge of the water. Under the shelter of a great rock that projected out into the current, a man in a gray flannel sailor-suit was walking up and down and repeating a number of seafaring expressions as rapidly as he could.

"Hello!" said Prudence Anne.

"Ship ahoy! Eight bells! Weigh anchor! All hands on deck!" responded the gentleman in the sailor-suit.

"What in the world are you doing?" demanded Prudence Anne.

"I am polishing up my professional vocabulary," he replied, giving a quick glance over his shoulder.

"What's your name?"

"Captain Waterbug."

"Do you own that boat?"

"I do," he replied; and added, "Binnacle, captain, marlin-spike," under his breath rather hurriedly.

By this time, the Measuring Worm and Miss Ladybug had joined them and they all looked anxiously at the vessel, which the Captain claimed as his property. She was made of a dried leaf, with the edges curled over a little, and seemed rather frail and insecure, when inspected closely. However, there was nothing better in sight.

"When do you sail?" asked Miss Ladybug.

The Captain scratched his ear thoughtfully. "When do you think would be a good time?" he asked.

"Now," suggested Prudence Anne promptly.

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The Captain shook his head. "That's quite impossible," he said; "there are lots of words I have n't even thought of yet."

"Where do you go when you do start?" inquired the Measuring Worm, who prided himself on having a head for business.

"I really could n't say," replied Captain Waterbug. "The tickets are n't printed yet."

The Measuring Worm was still wrestling with this unexpected difficulty when Prudence Anne gave a cry of alarm. She had caught sight of the Spider and his companion only a short distance away.

Without another word she ran and jumped aboard the boat, closely followed by Miss Ladybug. The shock of their combined weights was enough to cause the vessel to slip gently, stern first, into deeper water, and the Measuring Worm and Captain Waterbug had only just time enough to clamber aboard before she was entirely afloat. A moment later the current beyond the rock caught them and they started off rapidly downstream.

On the shore the Spider and the Blue Beetle shook their fists, and shouted something, which was lost in the roar of the rushing water.

Now that they were fairly launched, their craft seemed more seaworthy and, in fact, rode the waves so gallantly that Prudence Anne's last glimmer of mistrust vanished, and she felt so exultant and happy she could hardly refrain from dancing about, for they had not only escaped Mr. Spider and the clutches of the law, but were traveling down the path toward the front gate at such a speed as she had never hoped for.

Just then, however, an eddy caught them and twisted them about several times very sharply and in a manner highly disconcerting to every one on board, especially the Captain, who sat down very hard on the deck and remained there, looking up at them rather anxiously.

"Do any of you know anything about a boat?" he inquired.

They were compelled to acknowledge that none of them did.

"Good," said the Captain, apparently very much relieved; "neither do I."

"But does n't that mean that we're rather likely to have an accident of some kind?" asked Prudence Anne doubtfully.

"On the contrary," replied the Captain, rising and brushing his clothes, "it means that we are bound to have a very pleasant voyage. There is usually somebody on board who spoils everything by giving advice."

"Then you don't think there is anything we ought to do?" inquired Prudence Anne, feeling somehow that everything was not quite as it should be.

Captain Waterbug considered. "We might sing a rousing boating-song," he suggested happily.

Nobody knew one.

"It does n't begin with C," Miss Ladybug explained apologetically.

"Then we'll make up one," declared the Captain, and he very gallantly requested Miss Ladybug to contribute the first line.

After protesting that she really had n't an idea on the subject,



Miss Ladybug remained for a few moments in deep thought, and then, drawing herself to her full height, stretched out one arm and exclaimed in a solemn voice, "Sail on, sail on, thou noble ship!"

"For eighteen feet or more," added the Measuring Worm, with remarkable readiness.

Prudence Anne was not quite so quick. "A horrid bump will tell us all," she contributed finally.

"When we have reached the shore," cried the Captain triumphantly. "A mighty fine song and it's got a tremendous swing to it," he added. "Now once more!"

When they had repeated it several times, the Measuring Worm made a suggestion.

"It seems to me," he said, "there ought to be something about a race in it, just for excitement."

"Who with?" asked the Captain.

"I don't know exactly," the Measuring Worm admitted, "but —"

"Oh, look!" cried Miss Ladybug; "they have got a boat too."

"Who has? Where?" every one demanded.

"The Spider and the Blue Beetle."

Sure enough, in the distance, a stanch craft, bearing their enemies, was plainly visible. With a pang Prudence Anne remembered the new governess's remarks on neatness, when she recognized it as one of the peanut shells which she had thrown over the porch-railing the day before.



CAPTAIN WATERBUG CONSIDERED. "WE MIGHT SING A ROUSING  
BOATING-SONG," HE SUGGESTED



It was bad enough for their pursuers to have found a vessel. What made matters infinitely worse was the fact that it was undoubtedly gaining on their own.

There was excitement enough now to please even the Measuring Worm. All eyes were fixed on the tossing craft that bore the Spider and his dreaded ally, with an occasional glance ahead to see if there was any possibility of making a landing and escaping into the forest.

Once, indeed, they swung so near to the farther bank that Prudence Anne braced herself for the expected shock of the vessel's striking, but a swirl of the current carried them once more into mid-stream.

"Breakers on the port bow!" suddenly called out Captain Waterbug.

Prudence Anne rushed to the rail of the ship and stared out ahead. Almost directly in their course a large, dead twig, fallen from the elm overhead, had grounded in the middle of the flood and, round and about it, the water rushed and piled up into dreadful-looking white foam.

Were they going to strike it? If they did, would they capsize and be drowned and never get to the front gate at all? Or would they just hang there helpless until the Spider and the Blue Beetle came up and captured them ignominiously? All these questions Prudence Anne asked herself, with her heart beating faster and faster as they swept nearer and nearer to the threatening obstacle.

Presently, she gave a little cry of joy. They were going to



clear it in safety. Yes, they had cleared it! No! There was a slight jar and the ship tilted in sickening fashion and hung motionless, broadside to the stream.

"Help!" cried Miss Ladybug.

"Main-top-gallant sail and mizzen-mast!" bellowed the Captain.

"Keep still!" commanded the Measuring Worm.

Very slowly the faithful vessel slipped from its dangerous position and once more assumed an even keel upon the leaping waters. But they had lost valuable time. The Spider and his hostile crew were close upon them.

Breathlessly, they watched to see if, by some lucky chance, he might not come to grief upon the treacherous obstruction. But no, he sailed swiftly past, without even grazing it.

The chase could not last much longer now, thought Prudence Anne, and on one point she was determined; come what might she would not go back.

Suddenly she turned quite pale. "The stone step in the path!" she exclaimed; "it will be a regular waterfall and we will be carried over!"

"It's eight inches high," said the Measuring Worm, turning a shade greener than before.

"Man the lifeboats!" shouted Captain Waterbug, rather foolishly, Prudence Anne thought, considering that there were n't any.

"I think the water is going down," said Miss Ladybug, who had been looking over the side.

And she was right. As suddenly as it had risen, the flood fell and they were presently stranded at the edge of the path, with only a broad pool, here and there, as evidences of the raging torrent that had, only the moment before, been hurrying them to disaster.

"It's a very strange thing," remarked the Captain, "but it always happens like that. I've never gotten anywhere yet. I wish I knew the scientific explanation of it."

Prudence Anne laughed. She knew the explanation. The gardener had turned off the hose, that was all. But there was no time to be lost. Taking Miss Ladybug by the hand, she disembarked and hurried toward the bank, closely followed by the Measuring Worm.

Captain Waterbug, like a true sailor, refused to abandon his vessel.

As they gained the shelter of the grass, they could hear him singing:

"Sail on, sail on, thou noble ship,  
For eighteen feet or more;  
A horrid bump will tell us all  
When we have reached the shore."

## CHAPTER VI

### MR. WASP IS VERY DISAGREEABLE

WHEN the green forest once more closed about them, Prudence Anne breathed a sigh of relief, but she was well aware that the danger was not yet over. Some plan must be devised to throw the Spider off the track so that he would not be able to follow them and make more trouble.

“What is the best thing for us to do?” she demanded, pausing at the foot of a lofty buttercup and surveying her two companions anxiously.

Miss Ladybug suggested that they keep on across the narrow grass border until they came to the large square flower-bed where she felt sure they could hide themselves in the top of one of the taller plants.

The Measuring Worm disagreed, pointing out that this would not bring them any nearer to the front gate and would only allow the Spider to get ahead of them. He suggested that they conceal themselves somewhere near where they were standing, and, after the Spider had passed, go back the way they had come and continue their journey on the other side of the path.

But Prudence Anne objected that the Spider’s story was probably widely known by this time on the other side of the path, and they would be much more likely to be arrested there than in the section of the country that lay ahead of them.

While they were deeply absorbed in discussing which was the wisest of these courses to pursue, a traveler approached unobserved, and was about to pass by, when, chancing to glance at Prudence Anne, he came to a sudden stop and, calling out in a loud voice, "By George, that's one of them!" he advanced in a very threatening manner.

Prudence Anne did not need a second look to recognize Mr. Wasp or to perceive that he appeared to be in a particularly disagreeable frame of mind, which she supposed must be due to the fact that he walked with a crutch and bore other unmistakable traces of his late battle with the Spider. She decided it would be wise to be as agreeable as possible.

"How do you do?" she said cheerfully.

Instead of smoothing down Mr. Wasp's ruffled feelings, as she had hoped to do by this polite inquiry, its effect apparently was rather to increase his annoyance.

"How dare you!" he cried. "How dare you ask me that?"

"I am sorry," she pleaded. "I can see you're not well."

But apparently she had once more said the wrong thing. Really there was no pleasing Mr. Wasp. Now he shook his fist at her and fairly hopped up and down in the fullness of his indignation.

"Yes, I am well!" he shouted. "Just as well as you are! And, if I'm not, I'd like to know whose fault it is."

"It's certainly not mine," declared Prudence Anne rather sharply. She was getting a little tired of being scolded.

"Not yours!" exclaimed Mr. Wasp, pounding on the ground



with his crutch. "Do you deny that you were one of the pack of ruffians who set upon me and tried to rob me?"

"Good Heavens!" thought Prudence Anne; "that is just what the Spider said."

"Do you deny it?" repeated Mr. Wasp.

"Of course I do," maintained Prudence Anne stoutly.

"Absolutely?" inquired Mr. Wasp.

"Absolutely," declared Prudence Anne.

"She denies it absolutely," said Mr. Wasp to the two on-lookers.

"Of course she does," the Measuring Worm responded.

"Then what's to be done?" asked Mr. Wasp.

"I think you had better hear her side of the story," suggested Miss Ladybug.

"Is that quite regular?" demanded Mr. Wasp.

"Quite," answered the Measuring Worm.

"Very well, then," agreed Mr. Wasp, taking out a large gold watch that chimed, "but I must ask you to hurry."

"Why?" asked Prudence Anne.

"Because I prefer talking myself," he explained.

As rapidly as she could, Prudence Anne gave an account of just how she had gotten into the Spider's web and exactly what had happened after she got there.

"But that spoils my whole story," objected Mr. Wasp when she had finished.

With great difficulty Prudence Anne finally persuaded him that he could make just as good a story by leaving her out, and

that it was far wiser to have all the robbers imaginary, because then there would be no one to contradict him, as she would be obliged to do.

She further convinced him, with some assistance from the Measuring Worm, that, for the sake of his own reputation, the best thing to do was to find the Spider and stop that gentleman from further spreading his account of the battle. She even suggested that the surest way would be to have him arrested.

Mr. Wasp quite agreed with her. He was very affable and polite now, and, after a deep bow to each of them, he said good-bye and hobbled on his way.

"Well," sighed Prudence Anne, as she watched him disappear between the trees, "I do hope I have fixed Mr. Spider this time."

"I'd like to see them when they meet," said Miss Ladybug with a giggle.

"It would be a good thing if we could hear them," muttered the Measuring Worm, frowning. "I don't trust either of them."

The three travelers now proceeded on their way, bearing sharply to the left so as to keep parallel with the path, and came presently to an attractive-looking house, pleasantly situated in a bunch of white clover, with a sign over the front entrance on which was printed the word "Hotel" in large gold letters.

"What a queer place for a hotel," observed Prudence Anne.

"Let 's go in," suggested Miss Ladybug. "I'm quite tired."

Prudence Anne felt inclined to vote against this proposal at

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first, because there was really no time to waste, but the idea of sitting down for a few moments, where it was cool and comfortable, was a great temptation and made her hesitate.

The matter was finally settled by the Measuring Worm's announcing he was hungry and disappearing inside the door without waiting to hear what the others would determine.

They followed, after a few seconds' hesitation, and found him talking to the Landlady, who was dressed in pale green and sat in a rocking chair, knitting.

"I am afraid you have made a mistake," the Landlady was saying as they entered; "this is not a hotel."

"But you've got a sign outside that says it is," objected the Measuring Worm with some warmth.

"I know it," the Landlady admitted, smiling; "and you have no idea how useful it has been."

"What for," demanded Prudence Anne, "as long as you don't keep a hotel?"

"For making acquaintances," explained the Landlady cheerfully. "It was dreadfully lonely here at first, until I thought of having that sign. Now quite a number of people drop in."

"They don't stay long, do they?" asked Miss Ladybug dryly.

"It depends on how they feel about the sign," replied the Landlady; "some of them have quite a good deal to say."

"I think I must be one of that kind," declared the Measuring Worm rather heatedly.

"Then please wait until I get my daughter," said the Landlady; "she hates to miss any of it."

The Measuring Worm bowed and she went to the door and called, "Angela! Angela!"

Angela appeared with quite extraordinary promptness, and Prudence Anne felt almost sure she must have been listening outside. She looked and dressed very much like her mother except that she wore her hair down her back and had very thin legs and high buttoned boots.

She stared at the three strangers quite rudely with just a slight bob of her head by way of acknowledging her mother's introduction.

"Angela is a very shy child," whispered the Landlady; "please excuse her staring, she is so interested in finding a new nurse."

"Thanks very much," said Prudence Anne, "but she need not waste any time on me. I should n't care for the position."

"I should," declared the Measuring Worm, "for just about ten minutes." And he scowled at Angela, who sniffed and tossed her head.

"What was the nurse's name?" asked Miss Ladybug, more to keep the peace than because she really wished to know.

"Katy," answered the Landlady.

"Why did she leave?"

"She left to be a tight-rope walker in a circus. She had always been deathly afraid she would do it some day and she thought she might as well get it over with so she could live in peace."

"Do you think I am good-looking?" Angela asked the Measuring Worm quite unexpectedly.



"I do not," he replied promptly, without waiting even a second for the sake of good manners.

"Katy did," Angela declared as if that settled the question.

The Landlady smiled sweetly. "I am too busy to attend to the dear child's education myself," she confided to Miss Ladybug, "and so I am very anxious to get a nurse who will give her the best possible bringing up."

"Katy did," said Angela.

"They were perfectly devoted to each other," murmured the Landlady.

"I am afraid it will be exceedingly difficult to find any one to take her place," observed Miss Ladybug with a scarcely perceptible shudder.

"That's because I am too clever for most people," announced Angela calmly.

"Who told you that?" demanded the Measuring Worm, in a voice that sounded as if he were choking.

"Katy did," responded Angela.

The Measuring Worm retreated to the window abruptly. He seemed deeply moved and was quite red in the face.

"I really think we should be saying good-bye," ventured Miss Ladybug presently.

"Oh, dear me, no!" exclaimed the Landlady; "you must n't think of such a thing for hours yet."

"But you see," Prudence Anne explained quite firmly, "we feel that we really have to go."



THEY MADE A FINE PAIR OF RASCALS



The Landlady flushed. "I have never felt that way in my life," she declared.

"Katy did," said the Measuring Worm.

There was rather an awkward silence for a moment or two, because neither Angela nor her mother made any effort to conceal the fact that they were very much annoyed. Prudence Anne went over and stood beside the Measuring Worm at the window so as not to let them see that she was laughing.

As she joined him, he made a sign for her to keep silent and pointed. At the side of the road the Blue Beetle was standing and Mr. Wasp and the Spider were coming up the path arm in arm. They made a fine pair of rascals, the one with his crutch and the other with the patch over his eye and his arm in a sling. Fortunately the window was open and their voices were plainly audible.

"And remember," the Spider was saying, "you back up everything I say and I will make it worth your while."

"I promise," responded Mr. Wasp.

Prudence Anne turned quickly about. "There are two gentlemen just coming in to see you," she said to the Landlady, "and one of them, Mr. Spider, knows all about the most perfect nurse for Angela. Don't let him go until he tells you her address."

Then, seizing Miss Ladybug and the Measuring Worm, each by an arm, she fled out of the back door.



## CHAPTER VII

### PRUDENCE ANNE GOES INTO POLITICS

“Morning-glory ’s climbin’ up de railin’,  
Golden bee ’s a-hangin’ in de rose,  
Mockin’-bird ’s a-singin’ by de willow,  
Down where de water-lily grows.  
All de world am mighty pretty,  
Still I can’t be happy, if it ’s true  
Dere ’s an awful lot of people  
Does an awful lot of things,  
What it ain’t no use to do.

“Grasshopper ’s a-jumpin’ in de meadow,  
Butterfly is floatin’ in de sun,  
Chipmunk ’s a-talkin’ on de fence-rail,  
Hound dog is watchin’ all de fun.  
All de world am mighty pretty,  
Still I can’t be happy, if it ’s true  
Dere ’s an awful lot of people  
Does an awful lot of things,  
What it ain’t no use to do.”

So sang the Measuring Worm gayly as he trudged along. Prudence Anne glanced at him once or twice and frowned. She did not feel much like singing.

“I don’t see how you keep track of the distance unless you count,” she said at last.

“I know the distance,” said the Measuring Worm calmly.

“Where to?” asked Prudence Anne.

“The Ant Village; it ’s just ahead.”

“But should n’t we keep to the left?”

"Not just yet."

"Well, anyway, the Spider won't have much trouble following us if you make so much noise."

"I want him to follow us," asserted the Measuring Worm.

Prudence Anne made no effort to conceal her astonishment.

"For goodness' sake, why?" she demanded.

"I have a plan to get rid of him altogether."

"Oh, do tell us!" chimed in Miss Ladybug.

"Well," said the Measuring Worm, glancing about with pardonable pride, "I am going to have him elected Mayor of the Ant Village."

"Why?" they both asked at once.

"Because it's against the law for the Mayor to leave the village."

Miss Ladybug clapped her hands. "How perfect!" she cried; "then he can't follow us any more."

"Not a step."

"But won't he refuse to be Mayor?" asked Prudence Anne.

"How can he if he's elected?"

"But supposing he tells everybody he does n't want to be elected?"

"Then he's sure to be," he declared.

"I don't see why," objected Prudence Anne.

"I have an idea he is right, though," observed Miss Ladybug. "I know I have always wanted to be elected something, and I never have been."

"Exactly," said the Measuring Worm; "whereas, if you had n't wanted to be, you would have been."

"It sounds perfectly foolish to me," Prudence Anne confessed, after a moment's hesitation. "However, if you both think it's the best thing to do, I suppose I had better take your advice."

The Measuring Worm and Miss Ladybug seemed enormously pleased at her acceptance of their suggestion and each shook her warmly by the hand.

"And now," cried Miss Ladybug, "how must we begin?"

"By arousing enthusiasm," declared the Measuring Worm.

"How shall we do it?"

"In this case it won't be necessary on account of the great popular demand for our candidate."

Prudence Anne lifted her eyebrows. "Oh!" she said apologetically, "I did n't know there was any popular demand."

"There is n't," replied the Measuring Worm. "There never is."

"But nobody knows it, so it does n't make any difference," explained Miss Ladybug.

"I see," murmured Prudence Anne, which was very untruthful of her, because she did not see at all.

"But then," she continued anxiously, "what really is the first thing for us to do?"

"Have a procession," declared the Measuring Worm.

"With a band!" exclaimed Miss Ladybug.

"And speeches," added the Measuring Worm.

"Who will speak?" asked Prudence Anne.

"All of us."

"But I never made a speech in my life," she objected, feeling very nervous at the bare thought of such a thing.

"Neither did I," echoed Miss Ladybug.

"Then you won't repeat yourselves," said the Measuring Worm encouragingly.

They had come by this time to the outskirts of the Ant Village. It consisted of a group of large buildings, each of which had a number of doorways but no windows. A great many ants were going into, or coming out of, these buildings, and the streets between them were filled with a crowd, all of whom seemed dreadfully busy, although Prudence Anne could not make out for the life of her what they were doing.

The Measuring Worm stopped a number of people as they were hurrying by, and asked them very gravely if there was any truth in the report that the Spider might refuse to become Mayor of the village. None of them had heard anything about it.

"We ought to make every effort to persuade him," observed the Measuring Worm. "He would make a wonderful Mayor."

They all agreed to this, and one of them said that a friend of his had learned on very reliable authority that the Spider would accept at the last moment.

"I doubt it," commented the Measuring Worm, shaking his head, "unless we make it very clear to him that we all want him. He is a very busy man."



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“Of course,” remarked Miss Ladybug, “he will be particularly grateful to everybody who did their best to have him elected.”

“We’re all for him!” exclaimed a fat ant, whose last name was Augustus.

“Always have been!” cried another.

“Then let’s show him plainly how we feel,” urged the Measuring Worm. “Let’s have a procession or something so that he can’t make any mistake about it.”

“I love processions,” said the Fat Ant. “You feel so important when you are in one. I sometimes wish I were twins so that I could sit in a window and watch myself go by.”

“Then we’ll have one,” declared the Measuring Worm. And he immediately began to give directions, telling each one what to do and what to get.

Quite a crowd had collected by this time, but the Measuring Worm was equal to the occasion and gave each one an errand with such an air of importance that every one of them felt the success of the whole affair depended upon his efforts.

“What’s the excitement?” asked a newcomer, shouldering his way up through the crowd, and Prudence Anne immediately recognized him as Ant Bill, whom she had last seen at the top of the front steps.

Miss Ladybug explained that they were arranging to have a procession of all those who were in favor of having the Spider for Mayor.

“What does he want to be Mayor for?” demanded Ant Bill.

"He does n't want to be," explained Miss Ladybug.

"You don't mean it!" exclaimed several people.

"I think it's his duty to accept," interrupted the Fat Ant, "no matter whether he wants to or not. A man has no right to decide things simply to suit himself."

"You never spoke a truer word, sir," declared the Measuring Worm, extending his hand. "I want to congratulate you."

"Then we'll make him accept!" shouted Ant Bill, quite carried away by the general approval.

There were a number of cheers at this and Ant Bill drew himself up very erect and tried to look important.

The band had arrived by this time, and the Measuring Worm set about arranging the procession in some sort of order. At last everything was ready and they started off. The Measuring Worm led the way and behind him walked Prudence Anne and Miss Ladybug, trying very hard to keep step. Next came the band, and after it a long, straggling column of marchers, many of whom carried banners, bearing such inscriptions as "Vote for Spider," "We Want the Spider for Mayor," and "No Refusal."

A number of children scampered along the sidewalks on either side, shouting and calling each other's attention to various individuals. The Measuring Worm especially excited the admiration as well as the leader of the band, but Prudence Anne caught one or two flattering remarks about herself and Miss Ladybug, and some one threw an egg at the Fat Ant.

The enthusiasm by this time had greatly increased, and it

was difficult to tell whether there was more cheering at the head of the procession or amongst those at the rear, who had not yet learned what it was all about.

They had marched around the entire village twice and were starting for the third time when Prudence Anne called to the Measuring Worm in as low a tone as she could manage.

"Don't you think we ought to do something else?" she asked. "They will all get tired and go home if you don't stop pretty soon."

"I can't stop," he answered in a hoarse whisper, without turning around.

"Why not?"

"I've forgotten the beginning of my speech."

"Can't you think of another one?"

He shook his head gloomily. "Not as good a one," he answered.

"Perhaps Miss Ladybug could say a few words," suggested Prudence Anne. "Just to fill in until you remember," she added hastily, seeing he looked as if his feelings were hurt.

"Oh, no," Miss Ladybug protested, turning quite pale. "I could n't really. Please don't ask me."

"Well, then," said Prudence Anne very firmly, "I will."

They had come by this time to the open place in the middle of the village and she walked straight to the entrance of the largest building and, on the top step, turned and faced the crowd.

She did n't look flustered a bit, but she was really shaking

all over and had to moisten her lips with her tongue and swallow twice before she could make a sound.

"Ladies and gentlemen," she said quite clearly and distinctly, "I did not expect to have to make a speech — "

"That's my beginning," whispered the Measuring Worm excitedly from behind her.

"Well, I don't think much of it," she retorted, without turning around.

"You thought enough of it to take it," he complained.

"Then take it back and make your own speech!" Prudence Anne exclaimed.

The Measuring Worm shook his head. "I could n't use it now," he said; "everybody would think it was n't original."

"For pity's sake, don't quarrel," pleaded Miss Ladybug.

"Louder!" shouted the Fat Ant, from the front row, and a number of people farther back clapped approvingly.

Prudence Anne turned about once more and faced her audience.

"As I just told you," she resumed, when order had been restored, principally through the efforts of Ant Bill, "I did not expect to make a speech, but it's dreadfully important for somebody to say something and nobody else will."

"What's she talking about?" inquired the Fat Ant quite audibly.

"Silence!" commanded Miss Ladybug.

"You're doing splendidly," whispered the Measuring Worm encouragingly; "don't say anything anybody can remember."



“Order!” cried Ant Bill, and pushed the Fat Ant so violently that he sat down in a strange lady’s lap and had to apologize at great length.

When quiet was restored, Prudence Anne took a long breath and commenced again bravely.

“You ask what I am talking about,” she said; “I am not talking about anything.”

She had to wait a few seconds until the cheering had ceased, and then continued:

“I am asking you a question. I am asking you by what right the Spider refuses to be Mayor. Perhaps you do not realize how important it is to have him elected, but it is awfully important, and I am going to do everything I can to make it happen. Now what are you going to do? Are you going to allow him to refuse, just from pure selfishness, when the village needs a man like him?”

“He’ll have to take it!” shouted Ant Bill from the front row, and there was a tremendous volley of applause from everybody.

“Then remember,” cried Prudence Anne, “when the time comes, no matter what he says, or what he does, we will all vote for him.”

“We will!” they promised, without a dissenting voice.

Prudence Anne stepped back beside the Measuring Worm. “Just in time,” she whispered, smiling.

He nodded. The eyes of both were fixed upon the Spider, who was striding down the street toward them, unseen by the crowd, whose backs were turned squarely in his direction.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE SPIDER GETS EVEN WITH PRUDENCE ANNE

"CERTAIN conflict coming," murmured Miss Ladybug, and she descended hastily from the steps of the building, followed, at a more dignified pace, by Prudence Anne and the Measuring Worm.

The Spider, having already reached the edge of the crowd, lost no time in elbowing his way through without ceremony and almost immediately took the place they had vacated.

"What is going on here?" he demanded, looking suspiciously from side to side, over the many upturned faces.

"We were just arranging to elect you Mayor," explained the Measuring Worm, stepping forward and bowing in his very best manner.

"You may just as well save yourself the trouble," snapped the Spider, "because I won't accept."

"Is that absolutely final?" inquired the Measuring Worm anxiously.

"Absolutely," returned the Spider.

"Then I must telephone the Committee," declared the Measuring Worm, and he hurried away and disappeared into one of the neighboring buildings.

He was gone some time and everybody had grown quite impatient before he reappeared again.

"What did the Committee say?" demanded the Spider, as soon as the Measuring Worm had rejoined them.

"They said you would either have to run for Mayor or else give Miss Borer singing lessons."

"But, why on earth should he have to give Miss Borer singing lessons?" demanded Prudence Anne, who really could not keep silent any longer.

"Because her present teacher is the only other person to run for Mayor if the Spider refuses," explained the Measuring Worm patiently.

"Whereas, if I agree to give Miss Borer singing lessons — " began the Spider.

"You don't have to run for Mayor," answered the Measuring Worm.

The Spider frowned and paced up and down several times in deep thought.

"Where is Miss Borer?" he asked at last.

The Measuring Worm made a sign to the Fat Ant, who instantly bustled off and returned presently, conducting a thin, angular lady in brown silk, who wore her hair parted in the middle with three tight ringlets on either side of her face.

"I don't think much of her looks," whispered Prudence Anne to Miss Ladybug.

"She's related to the Beetles," returned the latter, as if that more than made up for any possible shortcomings.

In the meantime the Spider was being presented to Miss Borer, who seemed very bashful for a person of her age,

Prudence Anne thought, and made a great deal of use of her fan.

"The Spider is very anxious to hear you sing," observed the Measuring Worm presently.

"Really?" gushed Miss Borer, glancing shyly over the top of her fan. "How completely satisfying!"

"Could n't you — er — give us something?" stammered the Spider, perceiving that some remark was expected of him.

"Now?" asked Miss Borer in a low voice.

The Spider nodded, and Miss Borer, never taking her eyes off him, opened her mouth very wide and sang as follows:

"O'er Syasconsett's mountain  
Hangs the pale morning star;  
Oh! Ferdinand, dear Ferdinand,  
I wonder where you are."

When she had finished the Measuring Worm glanced expectantly at the Spider.

"Again?" he inquired.

"Yes," said the Spider in a faint voice; "just the last part, about Ferdinand."

Miss Borer gave him a grateful look and hastened to repeat the part of the song that he asked for.

"It's true," said the Spider solemnly, when the last note had died away.

"Absolutely no deception," agreed the Measuring Worm.

"The first time," continued the Spider, "I thought my ears had deceived me."



The Measuring Worm shook his head. "And about the election?" he inquired.

"I've quite changed my mind," declared the Spider hastily; "I'll accept."

The enthusiasm that greeted this decision was so tremendous that an old lady, who had been dozing in the front row, took out her ear-trumpet and asked, "Who did he say was hung?"

When the hats had come down out of the air, and people had stopped shaking hands and dancing about with perfect strangers, and the band had finished playing "I Never Had a Doubt of It, Did You?" all the way through for the second time, the Measuring Worm held up his hand. Instantly there was silence.

"We will now proceed to the election," he announced.

At this there was a stir all through the crowd. Six very fierce-looking Red Ants, in the uniforms of policemen, came up and stationed themselves about at regular intervals, while a number of men in overalls set up a long table, at which the recorders took their places, each with a green pencil and a large piece of paper, ready to write down the votes as they were cast.

"I will now introduce the candidate for the opposition," declared the Measuring Worm, and duly presented a Mr. Gnat, who read for some time out of a large book entitled "Suggestions and Complaints." He sat down finally, much to everybody's relief, because he pronounced his words so indistinctly that no one knew what he was talking about.

"Is he always the opposition candidate?" whispered Prudence Anne.

"Ever since I can remember," replied Miss Ladybug.

"Is n't he ever elected?"

"Goodness gracious, no!" exclaimed Miss Ladybug; "he would lose his job if he were!"

The voting had commenced by this time and two apparently endless lines of people were filing by the recorders' table.

"It seems to me they were pretty evenly divided," observed Prudence Anne, when the last citizen had finally succeeded in having his choice for Mayor written down. "I should n't be at all surprised if the Spider was not elected after all."

"Hush!" murmured Miss Ladybug; "they're just going to read the final result."

As she spoke, one of the men seated at the table rose and, having taken a long drink of water, announced:

"Spider 347  
Gnat 0"

"Let's make it unanimous," shouted the Fat Ant.

"It's unanimous already," objected Prudence Anne.

"Then we'll make it polygamous," declared the Fat Ant, who was dreadfully fond of long words.

The Measuring Worm raised his hand. "All those in favor, please say 'aye,'" he commanded.

"Aye!" cried everybody.

"Contrary-minded 'No,'" continued the Measuring Worm.

"No!" screamed the Fat Ant, who was by this time so excited he did not know what he was doing and became dreadfully embarrassed when he discovered he had said the wrong thing.

"But there must be some mistake," exclaimed Prudence Anne in amazement. "I saw lots of people go by Mr. Gnat's end of the table. Did n't the recorders put them down?"

"They tried to," said the Measuring Worm, "but I gave them all slate pencils."

"Why, that's cheating —" began Prudence Anne indignantly, but she soon stopped because she found no one was listening to her. Both Miss Ladybug and the Measuring Worm were hurrying across to congratulate the Spider on his election. He was soon quite surrounded by eager well-wishers and finally had to climb upon a chair to make his acknowledgments.

"And the first thing I am going to do as Mayor," he ended by saying, "is to have that person arrested!" And he leveled an accusing finger at Prudence Anne.

"You can't do it," protested the Measuring Worm hastily, much to her relief.

"Why not?" demanded the Spider.

The Measuring Worm tried very hard to think of a reason but could not.

"Because she is a book-agent," said a strange voice, quite unexpectedly, and, turning around, Prudence Anne discovered Mr. Bee looking at her through his shell-rimmed spectacles.

"Is that the law?" inquired Mr. Spider.

Mr. Bee nodded.

"It's a mighty poor law," declared the Spider.

"She's a mighty poor book-agent," explained Mr. Bee patiently.

The Spider and his friend, Mr. Wasp, who had just appeared again, moved a little to one side and consulted together earnestly.

"You need n't be upset at the idea of having me around," Prudence Anne called up to them, "because I am going to leave town right away."

"Oh, no, you're not," cried the Spider; "not unless I go with you."

"You can't," replied Prudence Anne sweetly; "did n't you know the Mayor is not allowed to leave town?"

Not for a very great deal would she have missed the expression on their faces when they realized what a fix they had gotten themselves in. And her heart gave an extra little thump or two when she thought that getting rid of the Spider meant that she and her friends could go on their way without any more trouble and that she would surely be at the front gate in time to meet Daddy after all. She had been terribly frightened, more than once, lately, by considering what a really and truly dreadful thing it would be if she were to get there too late. Now everything would be all right.

"Is that the law?" demanded the Spider, in a hoarse voice.

"Neither the Mayor nor any of the Heads of Departments may leave town during the time they hold office," Mr. Bee assured him.

"Very well," declared the Spider, pointing his ugly finger at Prudence Anne; "then I appoint her Chief of the Fire Department, so that she cannot leave either."



## 78 A JOURNEY TO THE GARDEN GATE

It took Prudence Anne a second or two to realize the full extent of this unforeseen disaster. She had been so sure that all her troubles were over, and now — why, she might be kept at the Ant Village for nobody knew how long.

It was really all the Measuring Worm's fault, too, she reflected, he had proposed the whole scheme of having the Spider elected Mayor, and Prudence Anne could truthfully say that she had never been in favor of it. It was all too unfortunate and she turned to Miss Ladybug for comfort. But Miss Ladybug had vanished.

"I need n't be surprised," thought Prudence Anne; "I might have known she was that sort."

"Permit me to offer my congratulations," observed Mr. Bee, approaching her with his hat in his hand; "you have gotten a very responsible position for one of your age."

"But I don't want to be Chief of the Fire Department," exclaimed Prudence Anne, her eyes filling with tears.

"It is n't as bad as you think," Mr. Bee answered consolingly; "there practically is no Fire Department."

"The trouble is I don't want to stay here," explained Prudence Anne.

"Neither do I," said Mr. Bee.

"But you don't have to."

Mr. Bee considered. "There is that difference," he admitted.

"And it's absolutely necessary that I should be at the front gate before dark," Prudence Anne continued.

"Dear, dear," murmured Mr. Bee, "I had no idea it was so bad as that. Do you speak Nicaraguan?"

"No," Prudence Anne admitted, "I don't. Would that help?"

"I don't believe it would," replied Mr. Bee, "but I was trying to think of everything."

Neither of them made another remark for several seconds, and even when Prudence Anne wanted dreadfully to ask a question about French and Italian, she restrained herself because Mr. Bee seemed so absorbed in his thoughts.

"You have n't got any very important relations who would assist you, have you?" he asked at length.

"I've got an uncle, who is Dean of a Medical School," suggested Prudence Anne hopefully.

"Is he very important?" inquired Mr. Bee.

"Oh, very."

"It's queer I never heard of him," said Mr. Bee reflectively.

Prudence Anne was just about to explain who the Dean was and all about him, when she was suddenly struck by the thought that, if Mr. Bee had heard of him, it might be in connection with an unfortunate habit of collecting rare insects and pinning them on corks in a glass case. What a dreadful impression that would make upon the people she was with now!

"I don't think he could do anything after all," she stammered.

"I don't believe he could," agreed Mr. Bee in rather a relieved tone. "You see I don't even know what a dean is, and I'm not at all particular."

## 80 A JOURNEY TO THE GARDEN GATE

Before either of them could hit upon any more promising way of obtaining permission for Prudence Anne to start out again on her journey, the sound of a voice calling out excitedly, and the rapid beat of footsteps disturbed their thoughts, and, looking up, they beheld Miss Ladybug hurrying down the street as fast as her legs could carry her.

“Fire!” shouted Miss Ladybug.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE FIRE AT PROFESSOR GLOWWORM'S

"WHAT is that person calling out?" asked Mr. Bee.

"Fire," answered Prudence Anne, but her voice shook so with excitement that she had to repeat the information before he understood her.

"She ought not to do it," he commented severely. "That's the way all sorts of rumors get started."

"But I think she really means that there is a fire," insisted Prudence Anne, "and, if there is, I suppose I ought to do something."

"Why?" asked Mr. Bee.

"Because I am Chief of the Fire Department. If there actually is a fire, ought n't I to let the people know?"

"It's always like that," declared Mr. Bee sadly; "tell a woman something and she wants to spread it all over town."

By this time Miss Ladybug had joined them, so out of breath she could only manage to speak a word or two at a time.

"Conflagration!" she panted, holding one hand to her side. "Complete catastrophe!"

"Where?" demanded Prudence Anne.

"At Professor Glowworm's."

"What started it?"

"He was playing cards with Mr. Firefly and —"

"Well?"



“And he sneezed.”

“Yes?”

“And upset his lamp in the scrap-basket, and the whole house caught fire.”

“Did they both escape?”

“No, they are still playing.”

“Good Heavens, they’ll be burned alive!” exclaimed Prudence Anne. And she seized Miss Ladybug by the arm and dragged her down the street, leaving Mr. Bee polishing his spectacles.

“I’m not coming!” he shouted after them.

“Then stay where you are!” Prudence Anne called back over her shoulder.

“I won’t do that either,” retorted Mr. Bee, and walked away in a very dignified manner.

Prudence Anne and Miss Ladybug had not gone far when they encountered the Measuring Worm, sauntering along as if he did not have a care in the world.

“There’s a fire at Professor Glowworm’s!” cried Prudence Anne, hastening toward him.

“How extremely interesting,” said the Measuring Worm, and promptly, having put two fingers in his mouth, gave a very long, shrill whistle.

Immediately the six Red Ants came out of one doorway, wearing hats marked “Police,” and disappeared into another doorway, only to reappear almost instantly, wearing helmets marked “Fire Department.”

"Where is the fire-engine?" inquired Prudence Anne.

"Where's the fire?" responded the Tallest Red Ant.

"At Professor Glowworm's," the Measuring Worm informed him.

The Tallest Red Ant turned to the other five and called out sternly, "Attention, company! Ladies' chain! Forward and back! Charge!"

Whereupon he suddenly started running down the street, followed by the others.

"But they have n't any ladders, or fire-engine, or anything," objected Prudence Anne, pursuing them as rapidly as she could.

"Of course not," the Measuring Worm explained, a trifle impatiently; "that's the very latest idea, they go so much faster without them."

"But what's the use of going at all if they have n't anything to put out the fire with when they get there?" persisted Prudence Anne.

"What's the use of having the fire at all?" demanded the Measuring Worm.

After that, they all ran so fast that Prudence Anne had barely enough breath to explain to the Spider and a few others who joined them where they were going.

At last, when she had just about decided that she could not keep on any farther, they arrived at Professor Glowworm's house, which was in a little clump of juniper at the foot of a small ledge.

The house was still standing and, indeed, at first glance, did

not show the slightest evidence of being on fire, but, deep in the shadow of the juniper, Prudence Anne's quick eyes caught a bright, tell-tale spark of light. It was not at all large and there was absolutely no smoke, but then they had no means of putting out even the most insignificant little blaze.

Craning their necks, they presently discovered Professor Glowworm and his friend, comfortably settled under a branch some distance from the ground.

Making a trumpet of her hands, Prudence Anne called to them.

"What's the matter?" asked the Professor, in a voice which showed plainly how annoyed he was at being disturbed.

"Your house is on fire!" shouted Prudence Anne.

"You must put your complaint in writing," replied the Professor firmly.

"I'm not complaining," explained Prudence Anne; "I am warning you."

"Then go and warn somebody else, I'm busy," grumbled the Professor, and returned to his game.

Prudence Anne was in despair. What could anybody do with such an unreasonable person?

"Oh, do please persuade him to come down," she called to Mr. Firefly.

"Why should I?" asked Mr. Firefly. "I don't like him any better than you do. He's beaten me two games already."

"But you'll both be burned up, if you stay," pleaded Prudence Anne.

"I tell you what I'll do," suggested Mr. Firefly to the Professor; "I'll play you one game to see which of us goes down and telephones the asylum; her friends may be worried about her."

"Agreed," nodded the Professor.

"You won't do any such thing!" cried Prudence Anne, stamping her foot. And then she suddenly remembered she was Chief of the Fire Department. "Go up and get them!" she said to the Tallest Red Ant.

The Tallest Red Ant saluted and, clicking his heels together, turned and gave his orders in the very best military fashion.

"Present arms! Swing your partners! All hands round!" And he instantly sprang forward and began to climb the juniper bush at an extraordinary rate of speed, closely followed by his faithful men and the Fat Ant, who had suddenly appeared from goodness knows where.

From the ground it was very exciting to watch them clambering up and to see them rush in and seize the Professor and Mr. Firefly and drag them away from their game.

Neither of them made very much resistance, but the table was upset and there was a certain amount of confusion, so that Prudence Anne was surprised to see, when the procession started to descend, that each of the players had managed to retain his cards.

"I've got the Knave of Clubs," said Professor Glowworm thoughtfully, and apparently quite unconscious of the fact that he was hanging, head downwards, over the shoulder of the Tallest Red Ant.



"So have I," responded Mr. Firefly, who was being carried along carefully by two of the Firemen; "it's a very close game."

Now everything would have been all right and they would probably have reached the ground without any mishap if the Fat Ant had not stumbled just then and plunged into the Fireman who was carrying Mr. Firefly's head, who staggered forward and upset the Fireman who was carrying Mr. Firefly's feet, who, in turn, hurled himself most unexpectedly upon the back of the Tallest Red Ant, so that they all came crashing down together and landed at the bottom of the juniper bush in a confused heap, amid a shower of playing-cards.

"I've got the Two of Spades," announced Professor Glowworm, poking his head out with difficulty from under the Fat Ant, who was almost crushing him, and exhibiting the only card left in his hand.

"So have I," responded Mr. Firefly, who was at the moment entirely invisible.

"You have n't at all! You have n't got anything!" cried the Professor triumphantly. "I win, and it's game and rubber, and if I do say it myself, it was a very difficult hand to play."

He was so pleased with his victory that he forgot all about being angry when the onlookers had at last gotten them straightened out and set on their feet, and he advanced toward Prudence Anne with outstretched hand.

"Why, how do you do?" he said. "I am delighted to see you and how are your little grandchildren. Quite grown up now, I suppose."

"I am afraid you are thinking of some one else," faltered Prudence Anne, rather at a loss how to answer.

"I am always thinking of some one else," responded the Professor, with a gesture of cheerful resignation. "You're not the first to speak of it."

"Where's the fire you were talking so much about?" interrupted Mr. Firefly rather crossly.

He did not seem the least bit grateful for his rescue, so Prudence Anne pointed out to him the angry sparkle of light in the juniper bush just to show him what might have happened to him.

"That's not a fire," he said; "that's the sun shining on a piece of broken glass."

## CHAPTER X

### THE SPIDER PURSUES PRUDENCE ANNE

THERE was no use in denying that Mr. Firefly was right. It was, indeed, nothing but a bit of glass. Even before the Tallest Red Ant got back from investigating, Prudence Anne recalled seeing Daddy toss it off of the path a day or two before.

What a perfectly ridiculous thing to have happen! How they would all laugh at her, when she got back to the Ant Village, for her first exploit as Chief of the Fire Department!

And goodness only knows how many times the Professor and Mr. Firefly could have her arrested for what she had done! If they did intend to be disagreeable, she would never, never get to the front gate in time to meet Daddy! There was no use closing her eyes to that fact.

"Now that we have succeeded in putting out the fire," observed the Spider in a very sarcastic tone of voice, "I suppose we might as well be getting home."

Prudence Anne glanced toward the Measuring Worm and Miss Ladybug for encouragement, but they were whispering together and paid no attention to her.

Nevertheless she answered the Spider with quiet determination. "I am not going back," she said.

"You are compelled to according to law," retorted the Spider, grinning at her.

"According to what law?" inquired the Measuring Worm,

who had finished his consultation with Miss Ladybug and drawn quietly near.

"The law which requires the Mayor and all the Heads of Departments not to leave town during the time they hold office," explained the Spider very slowly and distinctly. "I suppose, after trying to use it against me, you are not going to attempt to argue that such is not the law."

"I am not," said the Measuring Worm; "when I am in a place I believe in living up to the laws to the best of my ability."

"Quite right," declared the Spider. "I am glad to hear it."

"Of course," continued the Measuring Worm reflectively, "you ought to be sure that you really are in the place you think you are."

"What do you mean by that?" demanded the Spider suspiciously.

"Nothing, absolutely nothing," answered the Measuring Worm carelessly.

"Yes, you do," insisted the Spider; "now what is it? Out with it!"

"I simply fancied, from the way you spoke," replied the Measuring Worm, shrugging his shoulders, "that you thought you were still in the Ant Village."

"So I am," declared the Spider very positively. But any one could see that he was startled by the suggestion that he might be making a mistake.

"I beg your pardon," responded the Measuring Worm, with



the greatest possible politeness, "but you are, at present, just thirty-four inches from the Post-Office and that is exactly thirty inches beyond the village limits."

The Spider bowed deeply. "In the improbable event that you are telling the truth," he inquired, "what follows?"

"That no one is required to obey the laws of the Ant Village here."

"Meaning, of course," growled the Spider, "that she," pointing at Prudence Anne, "is not obliged to go back unless she wishes to."

"I doubt if any one," observed the Measuring Worm, "could have described the situation more correctly."

He tried hard not to smile, but the Spider could see perfectly easily that he was being made fun of and very nearly lost his temper.

"You think you're smart, don't you?" he stormed. "But you are making a big mistake if you believe it was you or any of your friends who have gotten the best of me so far in this business."

"Really?" said the Measuring Worm, who was genuinely interested. "Who was it, then?"

"It was the Landlady," snarled the Spider; "she insisted on keeping the Blue Beetle to be Angela's nurse. If it had not been for that I should have had my own policeman to make arrests and need never have been mixed up in this absurd business of being Mayor."

"Why are you telling us all this?" inquired Miss Ladybug.

"Just to let you know you are not quite as clever as you think you are," he answered.

"But it was I who suggested to the Landlady that you could get a nurse for Angela," Prudence Anne informed him.

The Spider tried hard to think of some very crushing reply to make to this piece of information, but could not, so he turned away without a word and, finding the eyes of the Fire Department fixed expectantly upon him, pointed toward home.

"Heel and toe! One, two, three! Take your supper partners!" cried the Tallest Red Ant, and, placing himself at the head of his men, he trudged sturdily away, followed by the onlookers and the Fat Ant, who turned repeatedly to wave his handkerchief, as the procession grew smaller and smaller in the distance.

As for Professor Glowworm and Mr. Firefly, they had long ago returned to their game and apparently quite forgotten the whole incident.

Prudence Anne gave a grateful glance at her two companions. "Thank goodness, that's over!" she exclaimed; "and how can I thank you two for all you've done? I did n't understand at first that you had arranged it all. I thought Miss Ladybug had just made a silly mistake about the fire."

"I could see that," replied the Measuring Worm, "and I don't know that I blame you. What I liked was your not getting cross and disagreeable about it. You never said a word."

"I very nearly did," Prudence Anne confessed; "and I hope it will be a lesson to me the next time I feel like blaming somebody without stopping to find out just how things are."

"Never mind," cried Miss Ladybug; "everything is all right now." And she sang:

"Here we go,  
Cross de flo,  
While Cæsar plays  
His ole banjo.  
Ise not vexed,  
But Ise perplexed,  
Sometimes, to tell  
What foot come next."

"Whatever happens," observed the Measuring Worm when the song was finished, "I, for one, am glad to be out of politics."

"So am I," declared a voice behind them, so close that it startled every one of them. With one accord they wheeled about and there, leaning against the stem of a buttercup and apparently waiting for them, they beheld the Spider.

Prudence Anne felt a sudden chill of discouragement run all over her. She would have been willing to give her word of honor that she had seen him march away with the Fire Department.

"Why are you still here?" she inquired with an unsuccessful effort to make her voice sound very severe like the new governess.

"Why should n't I be?" he demanded, in that disagreeable, aggressive manner he had whenever he thought he was getting the best of anybody. "If you are far enough out of the town to be able to say you won't go back, I must be able to say the same thing and I do say it. I'm not going back either."

"Where are you going?" she asked faintly.

"Wherever you do," said the Spider.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE COUNTY FAIR

PRUDENCE ANNE, the Measuring Worm, and Miss Ladybug moved off slowly down the road, and left the Spider, still leaning against the stem of the buttercup. He had not apparently the slightest intention of following them, at any rate for the moment.

"He must be waiting for some one," observed Miss Ladybug, as a last glance, at a turn in the road, told them he had not moved.

"His friend the Wasp, probably," suggested the Measuring Worm. "I think he sent a message back to him by one of the firemen."

Of course he was going to follow them later and make himself as unpleasant as he knew how. They all realized that, but, somehow, the mere fact that he was not actually in sight and that they were not compelled to have him as a companion on their journey raised their spirits immensely.

Beneath the nodding tops of the daisies and buttercups, through the tangled thickets of grass, where the sunlight made wonderful basket-work patterns upon the ground, past a great cliff of rock, half covered with the most beautiful moss, and under the spreading branches of an enchanted grove of ferns, the three travelers made their way, Prudence Anne stopping



more than once to exclaim over and admire some fresh wonder of this neglected fairyland.

Their attention was attracted presently by the ever-increasing number of people who were traveling through the paths of the forest, some singly, others in groups; all of whom appeared to be in more or less of a hurry and to be heading in the same direction.

"Where do you suppose they are all going?" Miss Ladybug repeated for the third time.

"Let's ask some one," suggested Prudence Anne.

Miss Ladybug clapped her hands. "You do think of the cleverest things!" she said.

"Of course it is clever," the Measuring Worm admitted, "but I should probably have thought of it myself sooner or later."

Although he thereby approved of the suggestion, he made no effort to act upon it, so that, after a minute or two, Miss Ladybug, who was painfully shy and hated to speak to strangers, took matters in her own hands and addressed one of the passers-by, a coarse-looking fellow, dressed in brown corduroy, with an extraordinary number of legs.

"I beg your pardon, Mr. — er — Mr. — " she began hesitatingly.

"Earwig," returned the coarse-looking person with unnecessary abruptness.

Miss Ladybug seemed so flurried by his tone that Prudence Anne took it upon herself to secure the information they wished.

"Could you tell us where every one is going, please?" she asked.

"Do you mean, can I, or will I?" inquired Mr. Earwig.

"I mean both," said Prudence Anne.

"I knew you did! I was sure of it!" exclaimed Mr. Earwig; "but, mind you, you did n't ask both."

"What possible difference can it make?" demanded Prudence Anne, a trifle impatiently.

Mr. Earwig became quite excited. "That's three questions you've asked me already," he said, "and you'll have to admit you don't know me very well."

"If I had known you well, I would n't have asked you anything at all," declared Prudence Anne indignantly.

Mr. Earwig seemed somewhat mollified.

"Good," he observed; "much better; you did n't ask me anything that time. Now I'll answer just one of the first three questions. Every one is going to the County Fair."

"And what is a County Fair?" inquired Miss Ladybug.

"Heavens alive!" shouted Mr. Earwig — "another one?" And he hurried away just as fast as all his legs could carry him.

"A County Fair," explained Prudence Anne, "is a place where you can go all day long and eat pop-corn and peanuts, and drink lemonade, and throw rings over canes, and have your fortune told, and see all the side-shows, and have a perfectly wonderful time. Let's go."

"But we don't know where it is," objected Miss Ladybug.

"We can follow the others," suggested the Measuring Worm thoughtfully.

Miss Ladybug gave a little cry of delight. "What an astonishing way you have of getting out of the most difficult situations!" she exclaimed admiringly. "It's really a gift, like being a conductor or a contortionist."

"Nonsense," declared Prudence Anne; "that's just plain ordinary common sense."

"She's jealous," whispered the Measuring Worm. And they walked on for a time in silence.

The crowd was growing quite dense now, and they came, presently, to a large cluster of toadstools, where there were flags flying and a band playing.

"Oh! isn't it perfectly thrilling!" cried Miss Ladybug. "What shall we do first?"

"See how much money you have," advised the Measuring Worm, who was always practical.

"I've got twenty-six cents and some trolley tickets," announced Prudence Anne, after a careful search.

"What on earth is a trolley?" asked Miss Ladybug.

Prudence Anne opened her mouth and then closed it again. How anybody could explain a trolley-car to Miss Ladybug was entirely beyond her.

Fortunately, just at that moment they came in sight of Mr. Earwig, standing in front of a toadstool and shouting at the top of his voice to attract the attention of passers-by.

"Come in!" cried Mr. Earwig; "come in and see the only

survivor of the greatest marine disaster of modern times. Forty-two days adrift in an open boat. Only ten cents admission."

"When is he fed?" asked the Measuring Worm.

Mr. Earwig pretended not to hear.

"Let's go in and look at him," suggested Prudence Anne.

"I hope he plays some musical instrument," murmured Miss Ladybug. "I adore the concertina."

After going through all their pocketbooks and making some rather complicated calculations, they got together the thirty cents required and advanced to the entrance of the toadstool, which had been provided with sides like a tent.

Mr. Earwig, having made a last unsuccessful effort to get some other members of the crowd to join them, took their money and admitted them, with an air of great mystery, to the interior of the enclosure.

Reclining at ease on a steamer-chair behind a wooden railing, they discovered Captain Waterbug, who seemed somewhat embarrassed at their appearance.

"Hello!" said he.

Prudence Anne gave an inquiring glance around the inside of the tent. "Are you the only survivor of the greatest marine disaster of modern times?" she asked.

"I am," replied Captain Waterbug, avoiding her eye.

The Measuring Worm drew himself up very straight. "This is too much!" he exclaimed angrily.

"I told him five cents was enough," pleaded Captain Waterbug.



"But the forty-two days in an open boat?" squeaked Miss Ladybug.

"I know," said the Captain; "I felt the same way about it the first time I heard him say it."

"Are n't you a little bit ashamed of yourself?" asked Prudence Anne.

"I was n't," replied Captain Waterbug reflectively; "at least I don't think I was until you came. You see Mr. Earwig is a wonderfully persuasive talker. After listening to him for a while, I find myself wondering how I ever endured all the hardships I did."

"Did not, you mean," corrected Prudence Anne.

"Exactly," admitted Captain Waterbug.

"Have you got any money?" demanded the Measuring Worm, coming very close, with an expression far from friendly.

"No," said the Captain regretfully, "I have n't. Mr. Earwig thinks it makes me more an object of pity to be penniless."

"And you are foolish enough to let him keep everything?" gasped Prudence Anne.

Captain Waterbug nodded. "He seemed to consider that that was the most satisfactory arrangement," he explained.

"It probably was, to him," giggled Miss Ladybug.

The Measuring Worm, without another word, turned and stalked abruptly from the tent, and Prudence Anne and Miss Ladybug followed to see what he was going to do.

Outside they found him shaking his fist at Mr. Earwig, who was just getting on a bicycle.

"Are you aware, sir, that you are a common swindler?" shouted the Measuring Worm.

"That's my business," replied Mr. Earwig coolly.

"I am delighted to hear you admit it," retorted the Measuring Worm.

Mr. Earwig seemed entirely unruffled. "We always strive to please," he explained, smiling pleasantly. "Anything else this morning?"

"Give us back our thirty cents," demanded the Measuring Worm.

Mr. Earwig first looked shocked and then saddened at this request. Then he got on his bicycle and rode slowly away, looking back over his shoulder, from time to time, as if he did not, even yet, quite believe his ears.

Prudence Anne, Miss Ladybug, and the Measuring Worm stood in the middle of the road and watched him till he disappeared from sight.

"Do you know," said Miss Ladybug, "I don't quite trust that man?"

"I wish I had n't!" exclaimed Captain Waterbug, who had ventured out of the tent now that the group of people in front of it had dispersed.

"You deserve all you got," commented the Measuring Worm shortly.

"And a good deal more," insisted Captain Waterbug. "I did n't get anything."

Nobody answered him or offered him the slightest sympathy,

and they were still standing looking at each other dejectedly, when a Gypsy Moth, with brass ear-rings and a tambourine, came up and curtsied to Prudence Anne.

"Pretty Lady like to have her fortune told?" she inquired with a cheerful smile that showed her white teeth.

"No," Prudence Anne replied. "I have n't enough fortune left to worry about."

"Pretty Lady going to meet somebody, perhaps," suggested the Gypsy Moth.

For an instant Prudence Anne's heart beat faster at the thought that it might really be possible to get some news of Daddy, but she shook her head.

"I am going to have mine told," declared Miss Ladybug; "if we'd all had it done before, we would not have gone in to see him." And she glanced reproachfully at Captain Waterbug.

"As far as that goes," responded the Captain, "if I had had mine told, I would n't have been there."

The Gypsy Moth, who did not understand a word of what they were talking about, smiled at them all pleasantly and took Miss Ladybug's outstretched hand, which she examined apparently with the greatest interest.

"I see a voyage over the water," said the Gypsy Moth.

"The greatest marine disaster of modern times," murmured the Measuring Worm.

"And a long journey," continued the Gypsy Moth, bending still lower over Miss Ladybug's palm. "It will all end happily, but you must beware of a dark man."





THE GYPSY MOTH TOOK MISS LADYBUG'S OUTSTRETCHED HAND





"That's the Spider," whispered Miss Ladybug excitedly.

"You will have a severe illness," went on the Gypsy Moth, "but you will recover and live to a happy old age."

"Will I be rich?" asked Miss Ladybug anxiously.

"Very," said the Gypsy Moth, "and celebrated."

"As an author?" demanded Miss Ladybug.

"As an author," assented the Gypsy Moth.

"Is n't that wonderful?" murmured Miss Ladybug to Prudence Anne. "Fancy her knowing I wrote."

"Fancy her not knowing it," snorted the Measuring Worm in a disgusted tone. "I thought you'd told everybody."

"I don't talk about my personal affairs any more than some other people I could mention," protested Miss Ladybug indignantly.

The Gypsy Moth patted her hand consolingly. "You will make a splendid marriage," she assured her.

"When?" demanded Miss Ladybug, almost breathless with excitement.

"Soon."

"Is some one very much in love with me?"

"Several people."

"But one in particular?"

"Yes."

"Is he handsome?"

"Very."

"Do I know him?"

The Gypsy Moth gave her a quick sharp glance.

"No," she answered, after a moment's hesitation. "Not yet."

"Oh!" cried Miss Ladybug rapturously, "a stranger! is n't that romantic?"

"Fiddlesticks!" exclaimed the Measuring Worm impatiently. "I never heard such nonsense."

Miss Ladybug drew herself up with great dignity.

"Come," she said to the Gypsy Moth, "I wish to talk with you somewhere where we will not be interrupted."

"Please don't," pleaded Prudence Anne quickly; "we really should n't waste any more time; we ought to be getting along."

"I am not going any farther," Miss Ladybug announced firmly.

"Why not?" asked the Measuring Worm.

"My place is at his side," replied Miss Ladybug.

"She means the handsome stranger," explained the Measuring Worm grimly.

"But you surely don't believe all this woman has been telling you?" demanded Prudence Anne in amazement.

"Every word," declared Miss Ladybug fervently; "and besides, she is only reading what is written in my hand."

Try as they would, they could not persuade her to change her mind, and so, at last, they turned regretfully away.

"It's just too bad," said Prudence Anne, feeling almost ready to cry.

## CHAPTER XII

### A TRIP WITH CAPTAIN WATERBUG

"It's a pleasant day," ventured Captain Waterbug, after they had proceeded for some distance in absolute silence.

"Don't tell secrets," growled the Measuring Worm shortly.

The Captain looked so crestfallen at this unsympathetic rejoinder that Prudence Anne felt sorry for him.

"Do you intend to return to a seafaring life?" she inquired, giving him a friendly smile.

"No," replied the Captain, without a moment's hesitation, "I do not. I've had enough of it."

"What do you intend to do?"

"I hardly know," the Captain said, after a short pause. "I have always had a strong desire either to be a piano-tuner or drive a stage-coach."

"They are two very different kinds of things, are n't they?" asked Prudence Anne, a little surprised.

"Not the way I should do them," replied the Captain confidently; "but I think on the whole I prefer the stage-coach."

"I know I should," agreed Prudence Anne heartily.

The Captain seemed much pleased at this, and murmured "Whoa!" and "Get up!" several times under his breath with a great deal of expression.

"What would you call it?" inquired the Measuring Worm



rather unexpectedly, because neither of them had thought that he was listening.

Captain Waterbug considered the matter carefully. "I think I would call it the Ocean Wave," he said at last.

"Is n't that rather an unusual name for a stage-coach?" asked Prudence Anne.

"Possibly, quite possibly," admitted Captain Waterbug readily, "but, when you think of the demand there is for names, I must say I think we are very lucky to get one at all."

"We'll be luckier if we get the stage-coach," grunted the Measuring Worm.

"There 's the very thing!" cried Prudence Anne, clapping her hands in great excitement.

"Where!" demanded Captain Waterbug and the Measuring Worm, both together.

Prudence Anne pointed toward a thick tuft of grass, in the edge of which, apparently fast asleep, lay a tiny Turtle.

"Is n't this luck?" she exclaimed delightedly, as they scrambled on board.

"Luck?" echoed the Captain reproachfully, — "when I had the name and everything all ready? I like that."

"Then everybody's pleased," declared the Measuring Worm; "let's start."

"One moment, please," objected Captain Waterbug, and he removed his hat carefully and produced a small tin cup which he held out toward his two companions.

"Fares, please," he said.

"Fares!" exclaimed Prudence Anne indignantly. "What for? This is n't your stage-coach."

"Whose is it?" asked the Captain.

"I don't know. I saw it first."

"But you can't even start it" declared the Captain, rather scornfully.

Although she was still a little resentful about the fares, Prudence Anne instantly saw the justice of this remark. Granted that she had been the first to catch sight of their conveyance, it was of no use to her unless she could make it take her where she wanted to go, so she drew out her pocketbook and deposited a coin in Captain Waterbug's cup, the Measuring Worm following her example with obvious reluctance.

"Now, how do you start it?" she demanded, a little impatiently.

"I have n't the least idea," replied Captain Waterbug, and put the two coins hastily in his pocket.

Prudence Anne and the Measuring Worm looked at each other thoughtfully. Both were anxious to express an opinion of the Captain's conduct, but afraid that they might not do the subject full justice.

Before either of them felt quite ready to make a beginning, they heard Miss Ladybug's voice calling to them and, almost immediately, had the pleasure of assisting her to a seat beside them on the coach. Prudence Anne, indeed, was so delighted to get her friend back that she completely forgot Captain Waterbug's questionable financial methods.

"Oh! I am so glad to see you!" she exclaimed, putting both arms around Miss Ladybug's neck and giving her a big hug.

"And I am glad to get back," responded Miss Ladybug. "I have missed you all dreadfully."

"Did the Gypsy Moth find that she had made a mistake about the handsome stranger?" inquired the Measuring Worm with what Prudence Anne felt was entirely unnecessary sarcasm.

Miss Ladybug leaned forward so that their heads were almost touching. "My dear," she said, "do you know that that woman positively did n't know a thing — she was simply guessing?"

"Not really!" exclaimed Prudence Anne, who remembered that Daddy had always warned her that it never did any good to say "I told you so."

"Really and truly," affirmed Miss Ladybug; "not that I did not always have my suspicions of her," she added hastily. "And who do you think she said he was?"

"Who?" asked Prudence Anne with just as much breathless interest as she could manage.

"Mr. Beetle!" declared Miss Ladybug. "Imagine!"

"I don't wonder he went to Florida," murmured the Measuring Worm, but neither of the ladies paid the slightest attention to him.

"All aboard!" shouted Captain Waterbug warningly.

And with a sudden very alarming jerk, which nearly sent them all sliding from their seats, their conveyance started off

rapidly, and, much to Prudence Anne's relief, in the direction in which she was anxious to go.

As soon as they were well under way, Captain Waterbug ascended to the highest part of the coach, and, producing a spy-glass from his hip pocket, swept the horizon in his best nautical manner.

"Eight bells and all's well," he called out cheerfully.

"You're not on a ship now; you're driving a coach," Prudence Anne reminded him; "though how any one can drive a coach without whip or reins I am sure I don't know," she added.

"It was rather careless of me not to bring them," Captain Waterbug admitted apologetically, "but you see I really expected to be a piano-tuner." And he drew a tuning-fork from his other hip pocket and, first striking it smartly upon the top of the coach, held it up to his ear.

"B sharp," he muttered.

"If I had been," retorted the Measuring Worm, "I should never have come on this trip."

"Why not?" asked Prudence Anne.

The Measuring Worm pointed at the clump of trees, under which they were at the moment passing. "Do you think it's safe to travel anywhere at this pace?" he inquired.

"We are going awfully fast," Prudence Anne acknowledged as the coach swayed violently to one side and almost dashed them all upon the ground.

"Are the horses running away?" demanded Miss Ladybug anxiously.



Prudence Anne glanced at her impatiently. "There are n't any horses," she said shortly.

"Then they must have run away," cried Miss Ladybug.

"And now the coach is running after them," observed the Measuring Worm.

"Contusions, court-plaster, and convalescence," murmured Miss Ladybug, turning quite pale.

"Of course, what has really happened is that Captain Waterbug frightened it when he hit it with the tuning-fork," explained Prudence Anne.

"I don't care what has or has not happened," interrupted Miss Ladybug firmly, "but I am going to get off."

"You will if you don't hold on," remarked the Measuring Worm.

Miss Ladybug did not reply to this really excellent suggestion. "Stop this instant! The coach is running away!" she demanded haughtily, turning to Captain Waterbug, who was trying in vain to look through his spyglass.

"We are not permitted to stop, except on the farther side of street crossings," he replied.

"But there are n't any street crossings," objected Miss Ladybug.

"And there are n't any stops," explained the Captain politely; "so you see it all works out very well in the end."

Miss Ladybug was evidently not satisfied and fumed and fretted for a few moments in silence.

"It's perfectly outrageous —" she began again.

But just then the coach swerved sharply to the left and Captain Waterbug sat down very hard and slid, only saving himself from going over the edge by clasping Miss Ladybug firmly in his arms.

"How dare you!" exclaimed Miss Ladybug indignantly, straightening her bonnet, which was very much over one eye.

"That's not the question," declared Captain Waterbug promptly.

"What's the question?" asked Prudence Anne.

"The question," said the Captain, "is, was I not right in thinking that piano-tuning is a better profession than driving a coach?"

"The consequences are probably less painful," growled the Measuring Worm, as they once more narrowly escaped being hurled into the forest.

"I am not so sure of that," replied Captain Waterbug, taking out the tuning-fork carefully, and rubbing the place where it had been driven into him by his fall.

"If you did n't tune a piano any better than you drive a coach — " commenced Prudence Anne. But the Captain interrupted her. He had once more regained his feet and was gazing ahead through his spyglass.

"Open water on the port bow," he shouted.

His three passengers looked quickly in the direction he was indicating. The path appeared through the trees, only a short distance ahead of them, and, at the nearest edge, glistened a wide pool, left undoubtedly by the recent deluge. The turtle

evidently had perceived it some time before and was making every effort to reach it as soon as possible.

"Heavens!" exclaimed Prudence Anne. "What shall we do?"

Nobody answered.

"I am glad I called it the 'Ocean Wave,'" observed Captain Waterbug at length; "it is very unlucky to change a name."

"It is n't as unlucky as being drowned," declared Prudence Anne rather warmly, with her eye fixed on the danger they were approaching.

They had still further increased their speed by this time and it was useless to think of jumping, so they sat huddled together, waiting for the awful moment when the turtle should launch himself into the water.

"I wish I had n't come," faltered Miss Ladybug, beginning to cry.

"Nonsense," Prudence Anne exclaimed. "You can swim, can't you?"

"I don't know," replied Miss Ladybug. "I've asked everybody and nobody seems able to tell me and, of course, I should n't dream of trying until I find out."

They were almost at the edge of the pool now and all four of them waited in a strained silence for the final plunge.

"Heads!" shouted Captain Waterbug suddenly.

And right in front of them they perceived a rope stretched across their path, just high enough for the turtle to get under. There was not time enough to move even a finger in any effort





“OPEN WATER ON THE PORT BOW,” SHOUTED CAPTAIN WATERBUG





to escape, and the next instant they were all swept from the top of their runaway conveyance and dashed heavily to the ground, where they lay for several moments, stunned and motionless.

"Have you broken anything?" asked the Measuring Worm at last, sitting up and feeling himself anxiously.

"I think I've broken my tuning-fork," replied Captain Waterbug promptly from somewhere in the depths of a bunch of sorrel.

"I wish you had broken your neck," snapped the Measuring Worm.

"I could n't very well, landing the way I did," returned the Captain. He really had a wonderful disposition and never took offense.

"Where is Miss Ladybug?" asked Prudence Anne in some alarm.

"Here I am," answered the little lady in question, crawling out from under a plantain leaf, not a bit the worse for her tumble.

"Then is no one really hurt at all?" inquired Prudence Anne, glancing at each in turn to make sure that they were not concealing any injury from her.

"Not so far," replied the Measuring Worm gloomily, "but we have not met the person who put up that rope as yet."

"And is it me ye would be after seeing?" asked a hearty Irish voice close behind them.

"It is," answered the Measuring Worm. "Where are you?"

They looked about them on every side, all four of them, but could see no evidence of the presence of any living creature.

"It is very queer," said Prudence Anne; "she sounded as if she were right beside us."

"I hope it is not a ghost," observed Miss Ladybug rather faintly.

"Faith, and ye have mighty little need to worry about that," said the voice.

This time there could be no mistaking the direction from which it came, and they all turned around just in time to see the speaker appear from behind an old, broken-down toadstool. She was a stout, cheerful-looking person, who seemed to be a little self-conscious of the gaudy circus costume of black-and-yellow tights which she wore.

"Why, it's Katy Potatobug!" exclaimed the Measuring Worm in a surprised tone.

"Not Angela's nurse?" asked Prudence Anne quickly.

"The very same," confessed Katy promptly; "and what do yez think of me new clothes? Sure, 't is not bothered wid any one stepping on the tail of me gown I'll be."

"Are you going in bathing?" asked Miss Ladybug somewhat anxiously.

"I am not," replied Katy; "'t is learning to walk the tight rope I am."

"Oh," said the Measuring Worm, "then it was you who put that rope there?"

"It was that."

"It gave us a very nasty tumble," observed Miss Ladybug.

"Faith, and ye got off easy," returned Katy, without the slightest attempt at apology. "Sure, 't is more than one bad tumble the blamed thing has given me already and 't is suspicious I am that there do be more coming."

"Let's see you perform," suggested the Measuring Worm, who was always anxious to square accounts and had not forgotten the jarring he received when he landed from the Turtle's back.

"'T is glad I'll be to oblige ye," responded Katy good-naturedly, "if yez will all stand from under."

As none of them were in the least desirous of receiving so substantial a weight as hers on top of their heads, they immediately complied with this request and took up their positions in a row a little to one side.

Katy in the meantime had once more disappeared behind the broken-down toadstool and came out presently, carrying a short step-ladder, which she placed against the pole that supported one end of the tight-rope, and mounted slowly and with evident misgivings.

Having reached the top, she stood up cautiously and placed first one foot and then the other upon the tight-rope, at the same time opening a large, green, cotton umbrella, which she used to help her in maintaining her balance.

The four spectators watched her in breathless interest, as she moved slowly out upon the swaying rope.



"Faith, 't is a fine job I do be doing this time," she exclaimed presently, beaming down on them.

"I should say you were," Prudence Anne agreed enthusiastically. "I think you are just as good as lots of people in the circus right now."

"'T is meself that agrees wid ye entirely," responded Katy delightedly, "and 't is there I would be, saving the manager, bad cess to him."

"What objection does he make?" inquired the Measuring Worm.

"Arrah, the divil do be claiming I make the animals laugh and 't is bad for them," explained Katy in quite justifiable indignation.

"There's my tuning-fork!" exclaimed Captain Waterbug suddenly; "she might fall on it and hurt herself."

Filled with this kindly thought, the Captain stepped forward and bent over to pick up the object he had mentioned. Either he chose an unlucky moment or his unexpected movement distracted Katy's attention enough to make her miss her footing. There were one or two violent swings of the tight-rope, a frantic clutch at the empty air, and then Katy descended with a tremendous thump squarely on the back of the unhappy Captain.

"Oh, I am afraid he's killed!" cried Prudence Anne as the three spectators rushed to the rescue.

With considerable difficulty and only by the use of their combined strength, they finally succeeded in raising Katy to her

feet and removing the prostrate Captain to a place of safety, where they worked over him for some time before he began to show signs of recovery.

In the meanwhile, Katy, quite undaunted, had twice again mounted the tight-rope and fallen off. At the exact moment when Captain Waterbug at last stirred faintly and opened his eyes, she was lying on her back on the ground looking up at the blue sky and singing softly to herself:

“I’d rather chase an alligator,  
Around and round de whole equator,  
Wif nuffin in my gun  
But a sweet pertater,  
Dan be a reckless aviator,  
I would,  
I certainly would.”

“Heavens!” murmured Miss Ladybug, “what a life!”

## CHAPTER XIII

### PRUDENCE ANNE ESCAPES THE SPIDER

IT was not until Captain Waterbug had almost completely recovered that Katy seemed to realize how near she had come to doing him a painful, if not serious, injury.

"Sure and 't was shamming I thought yez were," she explained penitently, and slapped him on the back with such hearty good-will that he started coughing all over again, and from then on was careful to keep some one between them as a protection against any further expression of sympathy.

The Measuring Worm, who had gotten the most tremendous amount of satisfaction out of watching Katy fall off the tight-rope, was now intent upon encouraging her to keep on with her practice and Prudence Anne was doing her best to persuade her that she had already proved beyond any possibility of a doubt that her talents lay in some other direction.

Miss Ladybug took little part in this discussion, and consequently was the first to hear some one approaching them, whose heavy footfalls and labored breathing indicated that he had come a long distance.

"The Spider!" Prudence Anne suggested as they stood listening and waiting expectantly for whoever it was to appear.

The Measuring Worm shook his head very positively. "This fellow is not after any one; somebody is after him," he declared.

He had hardly finished speaking when the Blue Beetle burst

into view and dashed toward them at the best pace of which he was capable, closely pursued by Angela.

"Stop him!" cried Angela, as soon as she caught sight of them.

"Don't do it! Don't let her get me back again! I could n't stand it!" begged the Blue Beetle, as he panted by.

"And who might that be?" inquired Katy, gazing after him in amazement.

"That is Angela's new nurse," explained Prudence Anne; "he seems to be leaving her."

"Faith, then, and he feels the same way about the darlin' child as meself," exclaimed Katy and mounted again hastily to her tight-rope.

Angela passed them almost immediately afterwards, running as lightly and easily as though she had just started.

"Pigs!" she said. "Horrid, nasty pigs! Why did n't you stop him?"

"Ring off," growled the Measuring Worm; "you've got the wrong number."

Angela made such an awful face at him, by way of reply, that Prudence Anne could not help laughing, although she knew very well that making faces is not a polite way to express your opinion of any one.

"What do you suppose has happened?" asked Miss Ladybug, who did not attempt to disguise her bewilderment.

Each of them had a suggestion to make and they were all talking at once when they suddenly became aware that the



woods about them were literally full of people running in their direction. The first one to come into view was Judge Caterpillar, who had taken off his coat and was reading a law book, although he was traveling over the ground quite as fast as the Blue Beetle.

"Quite a remarkable man for his age," observed the Measuring Worm admiringly, as the Judge skipped lightly over a bit of twig, which lay just in front of them, turning a page as he went.

"Thanks," said the Judge, bowing, and made a note on the margin of his volume as he disappeared in the direction already taken by Angela.

Ant Bill came next, closely followed by the Grasshopper, Mr. Rosebug, Doctor Mosquito, and a great many other people, all hurrying just as fast as they could. Not only was this sort of thing going on in their immediate vicinity, but in every direction as far as they could see figures were running, jumping, falling down and getting up again, apparently completely absorbed in reaching some destination as rapidly as possible. What could be the cause of such a remarkable exhibition?

Both Prudence Anne and Miss Ladybug asked this question a number of times, but evidently no one felt at leisure to stop and answer them, and they had almost given up hope of ever finding out what had occasioned such general excitement when Mrs. Beetle came along, driving a small pony cart. She stopped immediately when she saw them and they all crowded about her.

"Oh, please do tell us what has happened," begged Prudence Anne.

"Certainly, my dear, with pleasure. I've got it written down somewhere," replied Mrs. Beetle and began to search through her shopping-bag, in which she finally discovered a small piece of paper covered with writing.

Mrs. Beetle put on her glasses and looked at it carefully, turning it around once or twice as if she were not perfectly certain that she was not holding it upside down.

"I know it's one of these things," she said at last, "because I put it down so as not to forget it, but I'm not sure now which it is. Perhaps if I read them aloud, you will be able to tell for yourselves."

"Oh, I'm sure we will," assented Prudence Anne eagerly. Mrs. Beetle straightened her eye-glasses and read as follows:

- "1. Buy a dozen cakes of soap.
- "2. Have Mr. Beetle's evening clothes let out.
- "3. Telephone for the cook's reference.
- "4. See about theater tickets for Saturday night."

Mrs. Beetle paused and looked at them questioningly.

"I don't think it could be any of those things," ventured Prudence Anne after receiving a nudge from the Measuring Worm.

"There is only one other item," observed Mrs. Beetle, "and that's of no importance. I copied it out of the morning paper."

"Read it," suggested Miss Ladybug.

Mrs. Beetle did as she was requested. "Daughter of Promi-

nent Hotel-Keeper Kidnapped. Angela Kid Stolen by Nurse. Police Suspect Strange Plumber. Nurse When Last Seen Was Dressed as Policeman."

"Why, of course that's it!" exclaimed the Measuring Worm; "they just passed here a few moments ago and the whole countryside is after them."

"But that's perfectly ridiculous," objected Prudence Anne; "he has n't kidnapped Angela, she was chasing him."

"My dear," declared Mrs. Beetle in a horrified voice, "that only makes it worse; he must have hypnotized her."

Just then Mr. Earwig came past on his bicycle.

"Hurry!" he shouted, "they've caught them!"

Before Prudence Anne could argue any further, Mrs. Beetle whipped up the pony and started down the road at a smart trot, with the Measuring Worm, Miss Ladybug, and the Captain running behind.

Prudence Anne felt tired and cross. How could anybody be so silly, she thought. Imagine any one stealing Angela. They need not expect her to join in such a foolish performance. She was just about to sit down and wait for the others to return when she happened to raise her eyes above the tree-tops and caught sight of the white rosebush and the front gateposts right behind it. Without an instant's hesitation she started running harder than anybody.

By the time she had overtaken her companions they were already making their way into the outer edges of the great crowd which had collected at the foot of the rosebush, and Prudence

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Anne saw that nearly everybody she knew was present, even the Spider and Mr. Wasp, sitting in an old-fashioned victoria like the one Grandmother used to use in the Park.

Following the Measuring Worm, who made the most splendid excuses and apologies to everybody, they finally succeeded in reaching the center of the gathering and found that the Blue Beetle was talking to a man lying in a hammock, who wore a silk hat with the word "Secretary" printed on it.

"I don't care what anybody says," declared the Blue Beetle earnestly. "I won't go back."

"You will!" said Angela.

"I won't!" said the Blue Beetle.

"Hush!" commanded the Secretary.

"I won't!" said Angela.

"You will!" said the Secretary.

"Do I understand that there has been no kidnapping?" demanded Judge Caterpillar, making his way to the front with some difficulty.

"I don't know whether you understand it or not, but there has n't been," replied the Secretary.

"Then I am going home," declared the Judge. And there was a general movement amongst the crowd.

"Wait a moment, please," interrupted the Secretary; "you none of you seem to realize what a serious matter this is."

"In what way?" asked Judge Caterpillar.

"You are all trespassing on Mr. Toad's private grounds, and you will have to give your names and addresses."



There was a good deal of objection to this at first, but the Secretary was quite firm, and presently they all agreed to give the information required, which the Secretary wrote down carefully and put in a tin box.

When it came to Prudence Anne's turn, she gave her name, and then, after a moment's hesitation, said she lived in the big house at the top of the path.

"Nonsense," responded the Secretary; "no one lives there but people."

"But I am a person," declared Prudence Anne.

The Secretary was so astonished at this reply that he sat and looked at her with his mouth open.

"Have the kindness to permit me just a word or two," said a voice at Prudence Anne's elbow, and the Spider came forward and made a bow.

"Go ahead," said the Secretary.

"In the first place," began the Spider, "I should like to know if the Beetle is a nurse or a policeman."

"He's a policeman," answered the Secretary.

"Then I call upon him to arrest this person," declared the Spider, pointing an accusing finger at Prudence Anne.

"Why?" asked the Secretary.

"Because she is one of a pack of ruffians who set upon me and tried to rob me, an outrage that was only prevented by the extraordinary courage and presence of mind of one of my friends who happened to be passing."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Mr. Wasp.

"Anything else?" asked the Secretary.

"Yes," replied the Spider; "in addition to that she is a Beetle, one of the lot on whose account the whole garden was sprayed last spring."

At this terrible accusation there was a low murmur from the crowd, which grew steadily in volume until it became an angry roar. Prudence Anne could easily imagine how they felt, for there was probably not one of them who had not lost friends and relatives at the time referred to. Even the Measuring Worm and Miss Ladybug drew slightly away from her, and she began to feel dreadfully lonely and frightened.

"It is n't so!" she cried, as loudly as she could. "I give you my word of honor it is n't!"

"Prove it," said the Spider.

"How can I?" she asked, looking anxiously about her for one friendly face.

"I don't know," replied the Secretary, "but it's good advice."

There seemed to be only one way open and Prudence Anne took it. Hurriedly and not very clearly she told them of how she had missed Daddy; of how she had remembered the time when they had looked down the telescope together, and she had tried to do the same thing and had slipped and fallen through.

There was not a sound in the great crowd and she felt in her heart that she was not convincing them, was not even telling the story as well as she knew how, but still she struggled on bravely.

She told them of how she had learned that the only person who knew how she could get back through the telescope and regain her right size was Mr. Toad, and that she had made up her mind to come all the way through the garden and ask him.

She described the difficulty and danger she had had in getting down the front steps and how she had fallen into the Spider's web and escaped from it. She recounted her various adventures on her journey and how the Spider had pursued her; and she explained how it happened that he and Mr. Wasp, knowing she was a stranger and had no friends, were trying to have her arrested as a robber, in order that they might pose as heroes.

"That 's a likely story, is n't it?" jeered the Spider, when she had finished.

"No, I can't say that it is," observed the Secretary. "Where did you say she really lived?"

"Up in the dahlia bed, below the side porch."

"Then we 'll send her back there." And he made a sign to the Blue Beetle, who advanced and put his hand on Prudence Anne's shoulder.

"But you must let me see Mr. Toad first!" she cried desperately, wringing her hands.

The Secretary shook his head. "I am very sorry, but that's impossible; he's asleep," he said.

At that moment an alarm-clock went off with such a startling clatter that everybody jumped, and the Secretary hopped up and pulled aside the lowest leaf of a large pink hollyhock.

In the sheltered space behind it Prudence Anne perceived

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Mr. Toad comfortably stretched in a high, mahogany four-poster.

"What's the trouble?" demanded Mr. Toad.

"There is n't any," replied the Secretary.

"There's going to be," said Mr. Toad. And he got up and put on his slippers.

"Who are all these people?" he asked, frowning at the crowd.

"They are trespassers," explained the Secretary nervously.

"Did you let them in?"

"No, sir."

"Then let them out," said Mr. Toad. And, having wound up the alarm-clock he prepared to go back to bed.

"Wait a moment, please," Prudence Anne put in hurriedly. She had just caught a glimpse of the Bluebottle Fly amongst the crowd, and a new feeling of hope and confidence rose in her as she realized that here at last was a witness to the truth of all that she had said.

"What do you want?" demanded Mr. Toad, as he settled himself amid the pillows.

"I want you to let me stay here so that I can meet Daddy."

"Who is she?" asked Mr. Toad of his Secretary, pointing at Prudence Anne.

"She says she is a person," replied the Secretary, "and that she lives up at the big house. You asked me once to make a note of the fact that you liked the people up there because they killed the black snake who lived back of the wood-shed."

"I do like them," said Mr. Toad.



"But she's not one of them," interrupted the Spider.

"I am," declared Prudence Anne, "and I can prove it."

"You admitted you could n't a few moments ago," objected the Secretary.

"I have just found some one who can help me," explained Prudence Anne, and she beckoned to the Bluebottle Fly, who came and stood beside her.

"Tell them all," she said earnestly, "who I am and how I fell through the telescope."

"Why, certainly," responded the Bluebottle Fly; "nothing would give me greater pleasure."

And he immediately began the story.

"Come nearer," commanded Mr. Toad; "I can't hear you."

The Bluebottle Fly advanced a step or two and commenced over again.

"Nearer," said Mr. Toad.

This time the Bluebottle Fly went and stood close beside the bed.

"That's better," observed Mr. Toad; "now go on."

The Bluebottle Fly did as he was requested and his audience were already showing signs of great interest in his story, when Mr. Toad suddenly leaned over and, at one gulp, swallowed him up.

At once there was the most terrible uproar. The Secretary immediately dashed over to the hollyhock leaf and pulled it back into place, thereby shutting himself and his master off, as much as possible, from the surging mob, who were all shouting and

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shaking their fists at Prudence Anne. Why, she could not for the life of her make out. She had done nothing. Farther and farther back they crowded her until she was right under the white rosebush. Then the Spider and the Blue Beetle stepped forward and confronted her.

“You come with us,” they said.

Prudence Anne clenched her fists hard. “I will not!” she answered defiantly.

The Spider waved to the mob.

“Come and get her!” he cried.

With a great shout they responded. Hundreds, thousands, millions of them. Wriggling, crawling, hopping, running on every side. Terror seized her. It was of no use to try and resist. It was all over.

“Daddy!” she called; “Daddy! Please come and help me!”

## CHAPTER XIV

### AT THE GARDEN GATE

AND then something picked her up and lifted her high in the air and she felt her cheek pressing against a familiar shoulder.

Very slowly she opened her eyes and found herself held tightly in loving arms.

"What is it, little sweetheart?" asked her father's voice.

"Oh, Daddy," she whispered, "I'm so glad you came. I've just been having the most really and truly terrible dream."

"Tell me all about it," he said, stroking her hair gently.

And Prudence Anne told him, as they sat in the big arm-chair, with her head on his shoulder, while the light died slowly in the western sky and the stars were lighted, one by one.

THE END





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